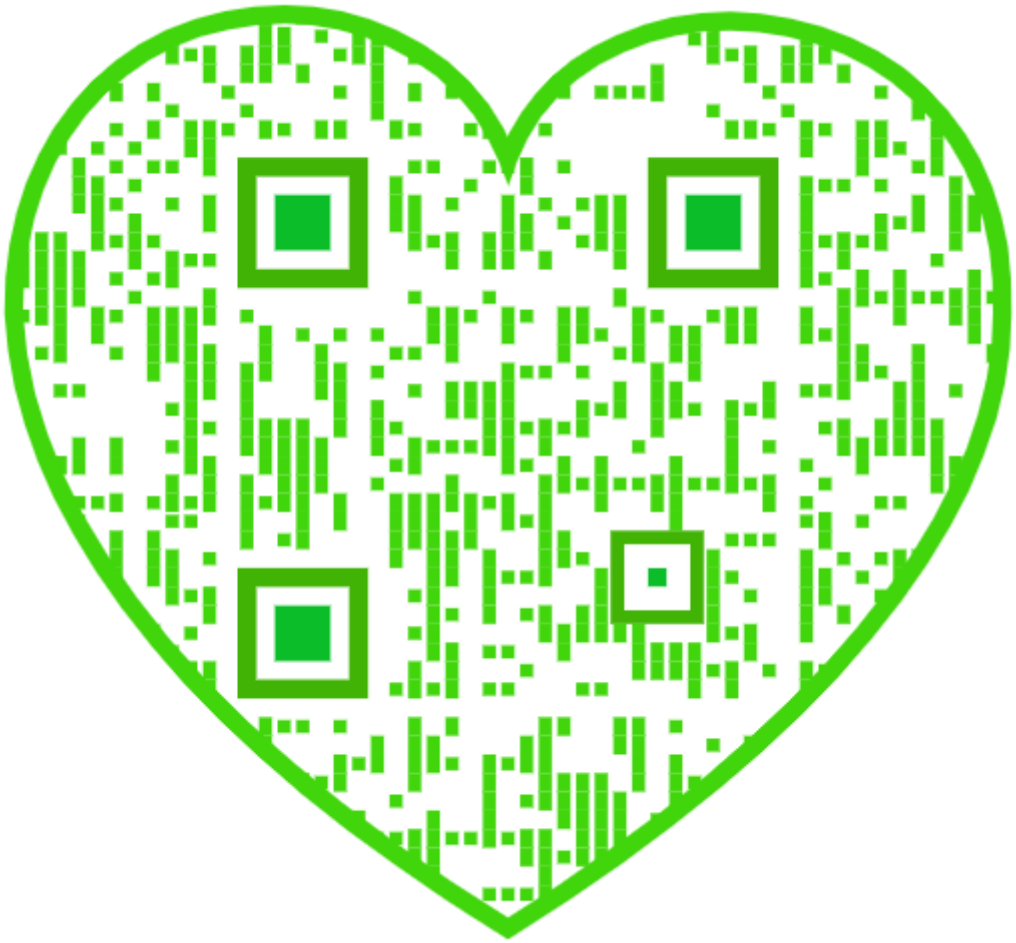

# THE GENTLE ART OF COLUMNING

# THE GENTLE ART OF COLUMNING

A TREATISE ON

## COMIC JOURNALISM

BY

C. L. EDSON

WITH INTRODUCTORY ESSAYS BY

DON MARQUIS
CHRISTOPHER MORLEY
FRANKLIN P. ADAMS AND
GEORGE HORACE LORIMER

Open Shelf Room

NEW YORK
BRENTANO'S
1920

PN4784
.C65E4

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THE DEDICATION
OF THIS LITTLE
BOOK IS TO

CHARLES W. PRICE

A CONNOISSEUR
OF WITTY JOURNALISM
WHOSE LAUGH RINGS TRUE

# CONTENTS


| | | PAGE |
|---|---|---|
| | SPEAKING OF PREFACES<br>by Don Marquis | 9 |
| | "THE PLEASANTEST OF ALL JOBS"<br>by F. P. A. | 19 |
| | "DAMNABLE AND DELIGHTFUL"<br>by Christopher Morley | 21 |
| | AN INTRODUCTION TO ALL INTRODUCTIONS<br>by George Horace Lorimer | 25 |
| I. | THE FIRST RULE FOR HUMORISTS | 29 |
| II. | THE PUNNING PARAGRAPH | 33 |
| III. | THE NEWS-SLANT PARAGRAPH | 41 |
| IV. | THE EPIGRAM | 53 |
| V. | PARAGRAPHS THAT JINGLE | 61 |
| VI. | THE HUMOROUS EDITORIAL | 69 |
| VII. | THE COMIC NEWS STORY | 83 |
| VIII. | COMIC VERSE | 96 |
| IX. | THE SUNDAY FEATURE | 106 |
| X. | THE COLUMN | 119 |
| XI. | CONTRIBS | 127 |
| XII. | HOW HUNCHES COME | 142 |
| XIII. | THE MYSTERY EXPLAINED | 149 |
| | APPENDIX | 169 |

## SPEAKING OF PREFACES

By Don Marquis

It was a rash act, on the part of Mr. Edson and his publishers, to ask me to write an Introduction to this volume. For they are well aware that when I sit down to write a Preface it is likely to turn into a Book, and that when I attempt to write a Book it is apt to dwindle to a Preface. And when one of my Prefaces does, by chance, remain a Preface, it is frequently a Preface for the wrong Book. . . . I once started out to write a Preface to a Little Book of Diaper Pins, and it became, before I knew what was happening to it, a Preface to a Cook Book. I remember that, at that time, I was greatly relieved that it had not turned into a Preface to a Book of Cigarette Papers, for I wanted the thing to have a domestic tone, a household flavor, and cigarettes are not nearly so domestic in their connotations as diaper pins, even though a great many of our modern women are more familiar with the management of the cigarette than of the diaper pin.

I state this fact about many of our modern women merely as a fact, and with no attempt at criticism. I can quite understand how they feel about it. I can sympathize with them. As the

Compleat Father, I can testify that cigarettes are more interesting than diaper pins, less dangerous to the life and limb of the adult, and less dangerous even to the insides of the young when inadvertently swallowed. A baby swallows a part of a cigarette, and you know the worst almost at once; but if a baby swallows a diaper pin, there is an element of uncertainty in the household intimately affected for some days. The question arises: Was the pin open, or closed, when the child swallowed it? If closed, will the peristaltic movement of the stomach open it? Or will it open itself in the duodenum? The child is X-rayed, from the esophagus to the colon: and as you pore over your little darling's photographs, feeling that you understand the dear baby more truly than you ever have before, you wonder if it really does look as much like you as everyone has said. Sometimes the pin is found on the infant's pillow in less than a week: he has not swallowed it at all, but only hid it in his mouth to assist him in cutting teeth, and he has sanely spat it forth again when he had no more use for it. Sometimes it is eight or ten years before it comes to light again, and you learn that he has been holding it in the mezzanine gallery back of his Adam's apple and using it to build adenoids over. And again, after thirty years, it may be removed from his vermiform appendix, and he may have a little darling of his own to whom he may bequeath it. A diaper pin that is passed along for several generations like

that finally gains a patina of sentiment and family tradition; it is encrusted with memories that give it a value far beyond its intrinsic worth, just as is a family portrait or the teeth with which some strenuous forbear bit the dust at the battle of Malplaquet.

But sentiment aside, the diaper pin really is a dangerous thing. One of the things that always fills me with profound discouragement, when I hear the human race boast of its progress, is the fact that during all these thousands of years of recorded history, no substitute has been found for the diaper pin. Women have gone on using them and being afraid of them. But now, since women have taken to the cigarette, and men must handle the diaper pins, there is hope. Say what you will, the male sex is the inventive sex. The emancipation of women from domestic duty, their entrance into the larger world of affairs, with the consequent flinging of millions of men into the household breach, is cause for optimism: housework will eventually be put upon a workable basis.

But to return to the present Preface. It has been intimated to me that I have been chosen to write a Preface to the book which follows because I am a humorist.

But I have consented to write it because I am no such thing. I am serious, fundamentally, whatever many persons may think. And it is only because I am serious that I am willing to connect myself with this venture at all. I am

able to look upon humor, and all theories concerning humor, from the vantage ground of an *outsider!* I can consider it because it is not an instinctive thing with me at all. It is this external viewpoint which makes the essays and lectures on literature of so many college professors so exceedingly valuable. Many Professors of English in our colleges and universities are quite incapable of producing anything fresh and human and readable themselves, and so they are able to examine the mechanism of literary production with a certain cool appreciation. They are detached. If they contained within themselves the wheels that must go round they might not be able to separate themselves from themselves sufficiently to take exact scientific note of the whys and hows of the process.

I began to be aware of this mistake regarding myself, this belief that I had in me the elements of a humorous writer, some five or six years ago. I had written for a newspaper a little philosophic sketch dealing, if I remember correctly, with Space and Time, and settling once for all some erroneous notions concerning the Universe that have been current for several centuries. Immediately after its publication the editor of a certain magazine with a vast general circulation sent for me. I thought . . . I hoped . . . that he intended to offer me a job. Perhaps a position, even. A pulpit, from which I might, so many times a year, deliver myself to the world, reforming its ethics,

straightening out kinks in its philosophy, shepherding it with my moral crook along the straitly narrow way.

But he revealed to me early in the conversation that he had sent for me for other reasons.

"I wanted to see you," he said, "because I had heard that you were fat."

"I am fat," I said, non-committally, and wondering what that had to do with it.

"Yes, you are," he said, with an air of satisfaction, and rubbing his hands as if he were a cook and I was a leg of mutton. "Fat! Quite fat! And getting fatter? Hey? Aren't you getting fatter? Hey?"

"Why, yes," I admitted, "I am getting fatter."

"I thought so! I thought so!" he said. And he smiled as one smiles whose pet theory has been confirmed.

"You keep right on," he advised. "Get as fat as you want to! Eat all you want to! Keep healthy, but get fat! I was sure you were fat. Nobody but a fat man could have written this!"

And he pulled from his pocket book a clipping of my poor little philosophical essay. He read it to himself and chuckled over it. And then he explained. It was humor. And it was his theory that humor is a sort of physical exudation from flesh; a divine effluvia, I suppose, as distinguished from the divine afflatus. He told me that, if I took care of my health, and continued to put on flesh, I had a great future before me; he urged

me, with tears in his eyes, to feed myself nobly and meet my destiny halfway.

I had not, up to that time, thought of humor as a physical thing. But I have often thought of it since, and I have wondered if there might not be some trace of truth in the theory. Certainly, as my girth has waxed, my reputation as a humorist has also waxed among a little group of friends. My most profound observations are apt to be received with laughter.

I do not like this, nor do I like being fat. I have suffered all my life from a bodily fatness imposed upon a slim and elegant soul.

There has, in fact, been a quarrel between my body and my soul ever since I was conscious of either, and the quarrel becomes at times so sharp and bitter that I am unduly conscious of both. I hardly know which is I, the body or the soul.

The body is, as has been intimated, bulky and somewhat unwieldy. It delights, or used to delight when there was such a thing, in beer. It is careless of appearance, it affects vaudeville shows and prize fights, it is democratic and lowbrowed and prone to sink into featherbeds of drowsy comfort.

It understands Falstaff and Sancho Panza.

But my soul understands only Don Quixote and Ariel.

What I have suffered from this unfortunate division of myself . . . what my soul has made my body suffer, and what my body has made my soul suffer . . . is too painful to inflict upon you.

My soul stands aloof from all the ordinary, commonplace routine of existence. It looks upon my body with scorn and reproach. It sets up an impossible standard and it refuses to compromise. When it was about seventeen years old my soul used to write sonnets which were published in the New Thought Magazines and other secret papers. It said over and over again that it wished that it had the wings of a dove; it used to intimate that it was not long for this world, and it had dark chestnut hair and a high pale brow. It loved to wander hand in hand with other souls and pick violets. It looked upon the rest of me with loathing.

It loves to stand in the twilight, clothed in black velvet, slender and interesting, and pluck the petals moodily from a rose, and cast them among the embers of a dying fire, while the plaint from one wailing violin speaks to it of love and life and woe. Sometimes, when it is standing so, it suddenly notices my body, and its lip curls involuntarily with a slow scorn, and it says "Ah!"

If it would only let my body off to be comfortable and common, say one night a week, my body could get along with it better. And yet, I am sort of proud of it, too . . . it is damned uncomfortable to live with, but after all, it is my soul!

I mention this duality in no spirit of irrelevance, for I have not forgotten that I am writing a Preface to Mr. Edson's book, but by way of further explanation; it is my soul that colors the

production of a large part of what I write, and it is the influence of my body that has succeeded in getting these lucubrations accepted as humor. The editor who thought that my philosophic essay was humor was confirmed in his belief as soon as he saw me; that is, when he appraised my physical appearance. If he had been able to see my soul, he might have understood that it was really highbrow stuff and not a josh of highbrow stuff.

I trust that I have not worn out the patience of my readers by talking about myself to such an extent, and if any of them have come this far with me they shall be rewarded presently by the perception that I really have, perhaps, the shred of an idea. Not a whole idea; merely one of the atoms which go to make up the molecule of an idea; or, perhaps, one of the electrons which go to make up the atom of an idea. I mean to say, that in attempting to answer the difficult question, or to comment upon a book which answers the difficult question: How does one become a professional humorist? I am obliged to talk at length about myself, and speculate upon my own case, for I am the only person whose decline to the level of professional humorist I know in intimate detail. I must look for the clue in my own experience. And I find that I have become a professional humorist, or rather have become, in a limited way, accepted for the humorist that I am not, and accepted in spite of an aspiration for better

things, largely through a mistake. The mistake arises fundamentally from this duality in my own nature which I have glanced at: I get a quite serious idea about something or other, and in the course of working it out something happens to it that gets it accepted as amusing. Perhaps what happens to it, partially, is that after the serious side of me proposes it, the other side of me gets to wondering whether it is so damned serious after all, and this wonder about it influences the mechanism of its utterance.

This is as near the fundamental as I will ever get in a consideration of humor. I am not going to apologize further for talking so much about myself in writing a Preface to another man's book, because . . . well, frankly, because it would be a little hypocritical. If any reader has survived this far, it is a reader who has grasped the fact that I love to talk about myself, and who has not been utterly repelled by it. Every person who writes is talking about himself all the time, directly or indirectly, deliberately or unconsciously, whether he will or no, and to do it frankly is not really any more conceited than to do it by indirection. If you are going to start out as a humorist or a philosopher, talk about yourself. You will know almost at once whether you are going to be permitted to go on talking about yourself or not. If the self you talk about is acceptable, the stuff you write will be acceptable. If not, another record will be put upon the phonograph

and your ego will be sent back to the factory to be worked over.

So much, which is little enough, but which is all I know, concerning the fundamentals of the matter we are glancing at. With regard to the mechanism of humor, Mr. Edson handles that capably and at length in the book itself. There is no reason why the mechanism cannot be taught and learned, examined, analyzed and exemplified. Schools of journalism were thought, some years ago, to be impracticable, impossible. But while certain old fogies in the newspaper business were still condemning them, they made good. I do not think anyone can be taught anything about humor, but I do think that certain persons may be taught the mechanism of producing humorous copy that will sell to newspapers and magazines, if they have the humor natively. I do not think that any person can be taught to write poetry, but I do think that certain persons may be lessoned to advantage in the production of verse, quite apart from the indefinable and winged thing which is poetry, that may be studied and communicated.

## "THE PLEASANTEST OF ALL JOBS"

By F. P. A.

It is wrong, it is unfraternal, to expose the secrets of the column-conducting game, but the publishing Mæcenas of this book is a preface-hound; he asked me to do it, and although I swore I never would write another preface, I am weak.

But I am swindling him. For there are no secrets of the game. Given a set of morning papers, any child able to frame a coherent sentence and to rhyme in simple couplets, can begin to write a column. In a day or two, the public will begin to help him; then he is an editor and a conductor, and the public does most of his work for him. Thus his task is the pleasantest of all jobs in a newspaper office or out of it.

When extremely young men come for advice as to After Graduation What? and expect to hear from me words of condemnation of my own trade — as they have heard clothing dealers, doctors, lawyers, druggists, hotel-keepers, actors, and ministers tell them, "Don't go into my business" — they are disappointed. I tell them, and I repeat it now, that there is no job in the world so interesting, so continuously stimulating, as the

newspaper-writing job; and of all the newspaper-writing jobs, none — not even reporting — so continuously exciting and pleasant as the job of column-conducting. You are editorial-writer, poet, editor, cartoonist, and reporter — and as much as you want of any or all.

"You have to write what they tell you" and "You have to conform to the policy of the paper" are the things the columnist hears from his friends the bankers, the brokers, the chauffeurs, the tailors — sometimes from his friends the newspapermen. I have columned daily since 1913, and in all that time I never have written a line I didn't want to write and I never have been asked by an editor or an owner of a paper to elide a single line. The newspapers I have worked for are the Chicago Journal, the New York Evening Mail, and the New York Tribune.

But the freedom is a responsibility, an enslaving burden, too. I have heard writers say what they would do if they only had the time, or if only they were allowed freedom of expression. Well, I have enough time, and I have utter freedom. And the only thing that bothers me — and more and more as the years go by — is that with all that time and freedom, I still haven't much of anything to say.

And if I haven't anything to say in a daily column, surely I haven't in a preface.

FRANKLIN P. ADAMS

## "DAMNABLE AND DELIGHTFUL"

By Christopher Morley

Not long ago I saw it stated that there are statistics to prove that fewer newspaper men commit suicide than any other class of laborers. This undoubtedly is because they know there isn't enough in the bank to pay the funeral expenses — especially now that Frank Campbell has such a big overhead, with Dr. Berthold Baer writing for him.

For a similar reason, there are very few ex-columnists. Charley Edson is one of the few. He is a remarkable man. His sad and sinister countenance mark him immediately as a professional droll. He was eminently the right man to write this book. He knows more about columning than any other columnist. This is evident, because he had the good sense to withdraw from that arduous, damnable and delightful job.

A queer thing about writing a column: as soon as you don't have to do it, your mind begins to effervesce with agreeable whims and crotchets. At home, at night (after the children are in bed and the plumber has been telephoned to, promising to come the first thing in the morning) you can sit down and write with immense enjoyment. But when you are actually on the job, and assiduously

occupy your desk with the paralyzing realization that the readers of your paper will be waiting for you the next day, expecting you to bare your soul in large chunks — a kind of palsy seizes you. Your mind shudders, with not even a paragraph handy to hide its nakedness. And then the phone begins its daily frenzy, and four or five genials drop in to ask you how's tricks, and you are shent.

It's when you don't have to do it that a job becomes entertaining. Mr. Edson, who is a natural born humorist, having cast off the columnist's sallow mantle, found his brisk and saline mind warmly diverted by a contemplation of his still toiling brotherhood. Regarding the dogged existence of the columnist in a gentle and leisurely perspective, this distinguished alumnus of the fraternity intensely enjoyed marshalling his meditations. It occurred to him that it would be a jolly joke on his fellow craftsmen to give away the tricks of the trade. This however is forgiven, for I understand that he has pledged himself to establish, with the royalties accruing from this book, a home for broken-down columnists on the lovely island of Bimini, British West Indies.

There is one quatrain of Charley's that I like to think of as typical of his absurd, whimsical and friendly mind:

> The frog's front legs are short and splay,
> His hind legs can't be beaten:
> But the front legs make their get-away,
> The hind are caught and eaten.

Charley, the light and waggish ex-colyumist, represents the escaped front legs, having hopped on into the free pastures of belles lettres. Those who are still in the game are the hind legs, and are caught and eaten daily. Please take them with plenty of charitable salt.

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY

# AN INTRODUCTION TO ALL INTRODUCTIONS *

## By George Horace Lorimer

"We live on newspaper cocktails, and when one dies down the barkeeps of the dailies shake up another for us." This epigram by Mr. Lorimer, who in his Paragrapher days used to do a Column called "Poor Richard, Jr.," is an appropriate foreword for this book, and we said so to Mr. Lorimer. He replied by giving his generous permission for us to "go as far as we like in using anything from his complete works" as an introduction to this volume. Whereupon we chuckled with a bright idea. The following Introduction is a warning against all Introductions and was written twenty years ago in "The Letters of a Self-Made Merchant to His Son." Keep this in mind, else the comedy will sound tragic.

I have never refused a literary person of merit such services in smoothing his way to the public as were in my power, although my reign (since Byron has so called it) was marked by some instances that imposed on good nature as well as patience. — Sir Walter Scott.

It's a Mighty Curious Thing that a lot of men who have no claim on you, and who wouldn't think of asking you for money, will panhandle both sides of a street for favors that mean more than money. Of course it's the easy thing and the pleasant thing not to refuse, and after all, most men think, it doesn't cost anything but a few strokes of the pen; and so they write a fulsome letter of introduction and hand it over to

* Courtesy Doubleday Page and Company.

a man that they secretly regard as a practical joke. Plainly this is not policy.

When your name is on a note it stands only for money, but when it is on an introduction or a letter of recommendation it stands for your judgment of the man's ability and character. And you can't call it in at the end of thirty days, either. Giving a letter of introduction is simply lending your name, with a man as collateral; if he turns out no good you can't rectify your mistake by redeeming your endorsement; you stand discredited. The first thing that a good business man learns is that his brand must never appear on a note or a ham or a man that isn't good.

It's getting so that a fellow who's almost a stranger to me doesn't think anything of asking for a letter of introduction to people that I myself do not know. If I try to let these fellows down easy by telling them that really I haven't had a chance to size up their special abilities, they always come back with an "Oh, that's all right — just write a line or two, and if there is anything about me that you like, mention it."

I give them the letter then, unsealed, and though of course they're not supposed to read it, I have reason to think that they do, because I've never heard of one of these letters being presented. I use the same form in all of them, and after they've pumped their thanks into me and rushed around the corner, they find in the envelope: "This will introduce Mr. Gallister. While

I haven't had the pleasure of an extended acquaintance with Mr. Gallister, I like his nerve."

Of course I don't mean by this that one should swell up like those fellows who brag that they "never borrow and never lend." They think this shows that they are sound and conservative, but as a matter of fact, it simply stamps them as mean and little. Most men at one time or another have needed help, and the never-lend platform may prove a mighty inconvenient one to be standing on. Be just in business and generous out of it. A fellow's generosity needs a heap of exercising to keep it in good condition.

I don't believe in giving with a string tied to every favor, nor of doing up a gift in so many conditions that the present is lost in the wrappings. Philanthropists who give away a hundred thousand or so, with the understanding that the other fellow will raise another hundred thousand or so, always remind me of a lot of boys coaxing a dog into their yard with a hunk of meat so that they can tie a tin can to his tail — the poor pup edges up licking his chops at the thought of the provisions and hanging his tail at the thought of the hardware. If he gets the meat, he's got to run himself to death to get rid of the can.

Some men think that rules should be made of cast iron; I believe they should be made of rubber, so that they can be stretched to fit any particular case and then spring back into shape again. The really important part of a rule is the exception to it.

# The Gentle Art of Columning

## CHAPTER I

## THE FIRST RULE FOR HUMORISTS

Now that the Prefaces are over, let's get down to the book. I was afraid those fellows were going to preface all day, and by the time my act came the crowd would walk out on me. They took so much time to introduce me that I think they were really giving my book the horse laugh. Those prefaces were cuckoos," the enthusiastic publisher tells me. Yes; they made a cuckold of me by all laying their funny eggs in my nest. After all, this is my book, — what there is left of it. The next time that I have a lot to say, I'll not be fool enough to write a book. I'll write a preface to some other fellow's book.

As the hour is late, and we are getting tired and nervous, I will not attempt to give you the complete work, but will detain you just a moment while I hastily sketch the outlines of my offering.

We begin with Puns, which are always referred to as the Lowest Form of Humor. Just how low they are is not definite, but a matter of comparison. One negro belle told another who had just related a spicy anecdote: "Woman, you is low. Nigger,

you don't know how low you is. You's lower than a whale's collar button when it rolls down the drain pipe at the bottom of the sea. You is so low you'd have to borrow a winder cleaner's ladder was you got a job polishin' the scales on a rattlesnake's belly."

*For Example:* "The Russians are rushin' the Finnish who can see their finish." "Austria is Hungary for a piece of Turkey." "Petrograd is still on the retrograde." "The Clown Prince is a Crown Quince: to hell mit the spiked helmet." "When the 'L' breaks down we get along subway or other." "When I told him where the pain was, the doctor said I probably had a-pin-in-the-seat-is."

Plainly, this is the lowest depth to which humor could descend. Like the slapstick comedian, it has struck bottom. The better newspapers bar the Punning Paragraph. It is abhorred by intelligent people. But children and morons delight in Puns. So pages of Puns are printed by those journals that seek vastness of circulation; for the big public is unintelligent.

The beginning humorist will find the quickest way into print is by the Pun route. But he will find himself in poor company; he will be roped off from the upper decks where fashionable humor shows itself; he will have "third class" stamped all over his luggage; and this will be a great impediment to him when he tries to travel in better company.

The First Rule for success, then, is: Do not write Paragraphs that Pun on Names.

But why is the pun universally despised by intelligent readers? "Mere snobbery by the educated classes," argues the young humorist. "The Harvard pundits scorn to partake of a joke that a rough-neck has enjoyed." This is not the reason at all. If it lay no deeper than this, there would be no science of humor to set forth, and therefore no logic in this volume.

The Punning Paragraph is rightly despised because it is a sound instead of a substance; it is a word instead of an idea. Words can put you to sleep with your clothes on; ideas can come pranking along and set your shoes on fire. Words are a sermon; ideas are a dog fight. The word "Petrograd" suggests a similar word "retrograde," and immediately the punster links them up in a silly Paragraph. If sounds were ideas, a jazz band would know everything. "Where has my Lima bean?" "Chang told a lie and the Li Hung Chang," "Austria is Hungary," "Dough nut forget to help the Starvation Army." All this is sound instead of sense, noise in place of ideas, "like a tale told by an idiot, much sound and fury signifying *nothing!*"

Are you surprised then that cultivated persons, seeking the adventure of an idea, avoid the ravings of the punster? "Down in front — the young dude's first mustache." A mere pun. "Farmers don't have time to shave because the farmer must stach his crops away, while the town man crops his mustache away." Nonsense. "A hare-lip is a

misfortune, but a mustache is a man's own fault." An epigram. This is by Ed Howe, who never wrote a pun. And he is one of our few immortal humorists.

No startling ideas will ever be given the world by the young man sweating out new puns on Austria-Hungary. How long would it take a punster to invent this Paragraph:

> The law can make you quit drinking; but it can't make you quit being the kind that needs a law to make you quit drinking. — Don Marquis.

The Kick River in Alaska might catch his eye, and he would link it in a pun with the River Spree, or seeing the Bug River he might say it was full of bug-juice, but he would never get an epigram; for, an epigram is not a jazz of sounds, but a clash of ideas. "Thought smites on thought, and throws off sparks to set the world on fire." — Eugene Wood. A punster is not apt to throw off enough sparks to set a river on fire, unless it happens to be a river of gasolene and the fool goes canoeing with a lighted cigarette. The punster is in a blind alley and the sooner he gets out, the sooner he will be upon the highway that leads to Bright Ideas. Popping off puns is like shooting at gnats with a cap pistol; there are mastodons passing by — get an elephant gun and go after them.

CHAPTER II

## THE PUNNING PARAGRAPH

For the purposes of this essay on Newspaper Humor, the author has divided the subject into the following classifications: (1) The Paragraph, (2) The Humorous Editorial, (3) The Comic News Story, (4) Comic Verse, (5) The Sunday Feature, and (6) The Column, a miscellany composed of all the others.

"What do I know about this subject?" you may wonder. I reply that I have been writing comic journalism, as M. Jourdain had been speaking prose "all his life, without anybody knowing it." It couldn't have been very bright stuff or I would not be obscure today. You are right; you have doubtless often read my stuff without paying any particular attention to it. I have not the obsession of believing myself famous. A young lawyer who had that obsession ran for the nomination for Congress. Canvassing the district he glad-handed an old codger to whom he said:

"Doubtless you have often heard of me, although you may never have met me before."

The old pioneer replied: "Quite the reverse, I assure you," and fixing the upstart with a cold eye, he continued: "I have seen you often, but

I never heard of you before." And so the readers of newspaper humor have doubtless encountered me time and again but never heard of me before. Well, here we are again, as the circus clowns say.

This is practically a text book for youngsters who aspire to be columnists. "Those who can, do"; the proverb says, "those who can't, organize a class and teach others how." Class, attention! Repeat with me the FIRST RULE of Paragraphing: "Do not write paragraphs that are puns."

Newspaper Paragraphs are of three kinds: PUNS, NEWS-SLANTS and EPIGRAMS. The Punning Paragraph is of two kinds: Puns on Proper Names and Puns on Words. And though the rule is never to pun, there are

EXCEPTION: Puns rightly put may have a NEWS-SLANT.

*Examples:* William Also-Randolph Hearst
Lord Done-Racin'
Abdul-az-iz is now Abdul-as wuz.

Wallace Irwin coined "William Also-Randolph Hearst" at a time when Hearst in one race for office after another was an "also-ran." John Kendrick Bangs dubbed Lord Dunraven "Lord Done-racin," at the time when he became disgruntled over his defeat and broke off yacht racing with America. "Abdul-as-wuz" appeared in every column when the Sultan of Morocco was deposed. These jests became highly popular. Let us analyze them to see why.

These puns are more than mere puns; they are timely — that is, they have a News-slant. They tell a funny story — a story that is funny without the pun. Ideas are here as well as noise; the noise emphasizes the idea; the sound intensifies the sense. And the sense is pleasing. Why does it please? This takes us to the very fundamentals of successful paragraphing. We warm to these puns because they fan the flames of prejudice.

*Memorandum:* When race pride is tickled and the foeman confounded the jest is a broad one indeed, for it is nation-wide.

The political enemies of Hearst felt their party pride tickled by this keen thrust; and they felt that the opposition was humiliated. The downfall of Abdul, a Mohammedan, gave Christians a holy delight. In the case of Dunraven the national spirit was flattered, and the rival nation discredited. We love a joke that hands us a pat on the back while it boots the other fellow downstairs. And when it is a whole nation that is being flattered and another nation that is being booted, that is humor with a kick in it, indeed.

*Example:* General Treat, commanding the Yanks in Italy, is no relation to Gen. R. E. Treat. — Bert ston Taylor in the Chicago Tribune.

Th. m also tells a story. A great general retrea. ollowing the Austrian break-through at Capore. ) had humiliated Italy. The Yanks

were rushed there to restore morale. This pun says in effect: The Huns chased the Italians but they will find the Yankees are a different proposition. (1) It is a racial boast, and a gentle jibe at our Italian allies. Another element is this: (2) It recalls similar personifications in humorous literature such as "Old R. E. Morse" in George Ade's lament of the morning after, "Arthur J. Arithmetic" and "Percival R. Percentage" in Grantland Rice's baseball dope, and "Billy B. Damn," a personified "cuss" word. (3) The pun comes at the end and serves as an emphasizer as rhyme emphasizes poetry. It is the snapper on the whip. The whip lash cuts, and the snapper calls the tally.

RULE 2: The Punning Paragraph may be successful when the pun is not only a noise but an idea . . . which idea (1) flatters our friends, (2) insults our foe, (3) recalls similar jokes, and (4) puts its "punch" at the end of the line.

*Compare* this paragraph that has no pun: The Germans with an indemnity to pay can now reflect that although they "kept the fighting off of German soil" they couldn't keep the mortgage off.

This paragraph has all the elements of the preceding ones except the pun. It flatters our friends and taunts our foe. It would be relished by friends of the Allies only; it has no point whatever for the Teutons. Therefore there is no such thing as universal humor. All clowning is confined to the vanities of a race, a party or a group. The bigger

the group that is flattered, the wider is the jest's prosperity.

*Other Forms* of the General Treat pun: "Gen. Treat will never retreat." "Gen. Treat will be no treat for the enemy." "Gen. Treat will never treat for peace."

These paragraphs are unsuccessful because they are a play on words instead of a play on ideas. They violate the essentials of Rule 2. This kind of paragraphing will never make the writer famous.

*Examples of a Failure:* At the time of General March's appointment as Chief of Staff, the Chicago Daily News printed this paragraph: "Generals January and February may have failed the Allies, but General March never will."

This fails because its jibe at the Russians is obscure and its flattery of the Americans is open to question. The memories it calls up are a series of failures by untried American generals. In the War of 1812 all the generals were disgraced except Jackson. In the Civil War a long series of incompetent generals preceded Grant. Even in the Spanish War General Shafter was a joke. Hence our vanity is not tickled, nor the enemy confounded by the mere boast that General March is infallible. The reference to Generals January and February is obscure because the public does not know the Russian epigram which reposes the country's defence in the winter's severity, i.e., "Generals January and February." Thus the paragraph does not "flatter friend" nor "insult

the foe." Neither does it call up famous jokes on a similar pattern; nor, finally, does it place the pun in the right place to give the needed emphasis.

> Where the Russian quits is where the Yank begins; out go "Generals January and February," in comes General March."

This form is better, (1) It insults the Russians by implying that they are quitters. (Historically, there is a proverb; "Russia always quits.") (2) It flatters the Americans by implying that they stick through the darkest hours (John Paul Jones, when the battle seemed lost, told the enemy "I have not yet begun to fight"). (3) It calls up a familiar pattern: the natural sequence of the calendar. Also the burlesque command to advance: "January, February, MARCH!" used by boys playing soldier. (4) It puts the punch at the end of the line.

### SOME INANE PUNS

Nate Salsbury used to do a column of puns in the Chicago Evening Post. When he began, Frank Adams predicted that the public would endure it three months. But it was war time, and the people were willing to suffer any affliction. The pun Column lasted more than a year. But at the coming of the Armistice, the people became pleasure seekers and lynched the Column. Here is the way it used to go:

"Wilson Flayed By German Press," says a headline. Aw, who's aflayed!

Speaking of blatting averages, as erst we were, the Chicago Browns seem to be boosting theirs.

Conversing as we have been in the recent past, with victims of the season's affliction, convinces us that the melancholy hays have come, the saddest of the year.

"Mumbo Jumbo is the god of jazz; be careful how you write of Jazz, else he will hoodoo you," quotes the Literary Digest, little realizing that it gives us a candidate for Who's Hoodoo in America.

Jazz must be getting popular when our litterateurs take it up. If we were given to that sort of thing we might say that its star was approaching the zenith. That being, unless our astronomy is astray, the top of the jazzimuth.

Would that we were Jazz Willard to knock it out.

Whenever we are particularly sore at the world in general our fury is allayed infallibly by listening to one or two of our next but several favorite composer. Music indeed hath Brahms to soothe the savage breast.

This Columnist, in striving after humor, sought it only in puns, as if by cracking a thousand puns, like a thousand oyster shells, he at last might find a pearl.

The Column that is based on mere puns is a failure. Only wit will carry a Column; but the witty Columnist often stoops to puns.

"Many a nincompoop pays an income tax," wrote F. P. A. in 1911. The parallel sounds of nincompoop and nincomtax was all. But its

absurdity makes one laugh. We laugh with F. P. A. who in turn is laughing at his own frailty in making such a senseless pun. Here are some more puns from his column:

Motto for Miss Elsie Ferguson on her return to the legitimate stage: "I have been faithful to thee, Cinema — in my fashion." (This partakes more of the nature of parody than of punning. A writer in "Vanity Fair" recently parodied the entire Dowson poem from the viewpoint of a scenario editor who changes a story as he adapts it to the screen: "I have been faithful to thee, Scenario — in my fashion.")

Homer Aids Boston to Conquer Giants, — Times headline. Yet the universities are abolishing Greek.

The spirit stuff has reached the point where we expect to read soon of the Ouija Board of Education and the Ouija Board of Estimate, not to say the editorial Ouija.

"In this psychic era — and housing shortage period," writes Ted Robinson, "it is increasingly hard to find the simple necessities of board and lodging. The best one gets is Ouija board and Sir Oliver Lodging."

A reading of these paragraphs should cure any young humorist of the tendency to write puns. If this happy result is attained, the author feels that he is repaid for appending that list of inanities. The cure for war-mad Prussia was a dose of war; and the cure for the incipient punster is a dose of puns. With these few remarks, we leave you flat on your back, and proceed to the next chapter where a large audience is impatiently awaiting us.

CHAPTER III

## THE NEWS-SLANT PARAGRAPH

THE News-slant Paragraph is the essence of comic journalism. "*Wilson Up Early To View Alps*," *says a headline.* "*The Alps had stayed up all night waiting for him.*" Such is the impudence of the Paragrapher. He is Scaramouch making faces at the King. And his art, like the actor's gesture and the note upon the singer's lips, perishes at the moment of its creation. That is — there was a time when the art of actor and singer perished at the moment of its birth; but now the film and phonograph preserve these forms of art. But the News-slant Paragraph can't be preserved, even with benzoate of soda. It is not worth preserving; it is like the manna in the wilderness: partake of it fully but don't try to save any of it over for tomorrow's breakfast; tomorrow it must be gathered anew.

Timeliness is its essence, and therefore the News-slant Paragraph is journalism literally. Journal means daily, and the News Paragraph is a midge whose life cycle is a day. Its twin sisters, the Pun and the Epigram, may live for days or forever.

The News Paragraph is the quick slap you give your enemy when you catch him off guard. It

is the thrust in tierce that touches him; a hit, a very palpable hit. Let us analyze the one at the head of this chapter. The Paragrapher, being peeved at President Wilson, seeks a chance to show his grudge. (All true humor, we insist, is based on a grouch. If you are not ill-natured you cannot be a humorist. The popular conception of a funny-man is that he writes in a mood bubbling over with good nature. The truth is, he is as good natured as a bumblebee. All day he roves the flowery fields looking for somebody to sting. And if he fails to sting anybody, the audience murmurs: "This is too tame a bull fight. I want my money back.") And so the hater of Wilson (this was written in 1918 when Wilson at the height of his popularity was hailed by the European rabble as a god) reads in a headline that the President arose early to view the Alps. There is the opening — now, how to sting him.

*The Dose of Venom:* Wilson is in Europe with the prestige of a conquering hero, darn him. The Europeans are crazy in their adulation of him, although truth to tell, he is a most ordinary man, as all Republicans know. But he towers in France like a colossus; he bestrides their narrow world and gives it the once-over with a view to remolding the map. He is swollen with human vanity; he takes himself at a gargantuan valuation. He will shape borders and boundaries to suit himself; rivers and mountain ranges awaiting their shift in location, curiously expectant, climb to the roof tops of their watersheds to get the first glimpse of their new and terrible Commander. But after all, he is just another deluded Messiah. He is a

Leatherwood God, a Don Quixote riding to a fall. The Eternal Hills smile sphinx-like at the human comedy; they have seen it all a hundred times before. Man and his generations are like grass. "A day, a day, a day; and the years, they pass away. But the blue Alsatian mountains, ever watch and wait alway!"

But the sardonic paragrapher can't say all this in ten words. Oh, yes, he can. He said it.

His epigram was of the hour; and it perished in an hour. It was a News-slant, and the News-slant is a bubble blown only for the bursting. And yet it was as true, as cutting, and as bitter as the epigrams of La Rochefoucault that live forever. (The analysis of this News-slant Paragraph was written at the same time as the Paragraph which appeared in the New York Evening Sun in November, 1918.)

The war was brought on, so the Huns declared, by the everlasting jealousy of Germany's happy lot. All right, Heinie, here is one cause of war that has been removed forever.

Another successful Paragraph; see how it bites. When thrown on the screen of the picture theatres the printed words aroused the audiences to laughter. It is as pungent as the victory song of some Old Testament King; and the laughter in it is not the harmless mirth of Pollyanna the glad girl. It is the ill-humored laughter of men who jibe the beaten foe. Our hates are stronger than our loves, and that's why there are no popular

jokes about mother, and millions about "mother-in-law."

The effectiveness of a News Paragraph is sometimes based on its hard, cruel common sense. This, for instance, by Bert Leston Taylor just before Germany's last gigantic offensive on the West Front:

> The supply of peace talk may as well be conserved until the Teut gets his west-front drive out of his system. Then one side or the other will dictate terms.

How true this is. How prophetic. Read it over again. Remember it was written before the All-Conquering Kaiser struck with full force in the West. With his hand poised to strike, he offered Peace. A thousand "expert" voices were raised in discussion: millions of words were being printed. Then with an ill-natured snarl, the Columnist swept all the windy experts into the waste can, and in thirty words, between clenched teeth, he told the truth, he told it all. There it stood written in his column; today it is written in the history of the world.

> RULE 3. Good horse sense couched in words that nobody can dispute is the basis of the best News Paragraphs.

Here are a few more examples of the topical paragraph deriving its power from the succinctness with which it sets forth a sinister truth:

Asked for the casualty figures, Gen. Villa gave a "rough estimate." Anything you get from Villa will be rough.

Huerta says he isn't whipped yet, not by a jugful. Let him drink a few more jugfuls — it will get him.

Readers are asking who will win the European war. Might as well ask who *won* the San Francisco earthquake!

Germany was whipped only by "numerical superiority." But one kind of superiority is as good as another — if it whips you.

The town of Double Trouble, N. J., has declined the suggestion by the Post Office department that it change its name to Wilson. Double is enough. — New York Evening Sun.

Satan is smoking up the human race and using Europe as the ash tray. — Benjamin De Casseres.

Here are some News-slants of a lighter nature:

THE KAISER-BAITING MOVIES

Any geezer that *looks* like the Kaiser
And is game to be biffed on the bean,
Can name his own pay and have work every day
Being cuffed for a Hun — on the screen.

Professor Yerkes of Harvard says he has an orang-utan which is more intelligent than a three-year-old child. We'd like to be there when the professor mentions the interesting fact to the child's mother.

A Zoo keeper in Denver claims to have the missing link. It is a three-legged monkey, which bridges the gap between the four-legged kind and the two-legged.

The New York Herald has been consolidated with the Sun. Good papers when they die, go to Frank A. Munsey. — Bert Leston Taylor.

Citizenship has been conferred on President Wilson by so many countries in Europe, that when he returns he may be detained at Ellis Island as a gang of undesirable aliens.

If Wilson runs for a third term, he might adopt the slogan: He kept us out of sugar. — Topeka Journal.

The nine cabinet heads that have fallen beneath the flying brickbats reminds one of a passage in "The Prince and The Pauper." When they asked Tom Canty what he had used the seal of state for, he answered: "To crack nuts with."

A woman was used by Oklahoma plotters to tempt Senator Gore. But when they try to tempt Al Jennings, the bandit-candidate for governor, they'll lock him up in the same room with a train.

This latter paragraph was written by Ed. Howe. Note how it is based entirely on a searching and cynical knowledge of human nature. All his paragraphs are based upon that element. Ed. Howe was the first American publisher to bid for newspaper circulation on the basis of a funny column. The column was the feature of the paper, was printed on the first page and it was written by Mr. Howe himself. The paper was the Atchison (Kans.) Globe, and the column was called "Globe Sights," named after a kind of sight used on long-distance rifles. The Globe Sights all hit

the bull's eye. The paper flourished and became famous. The Paragraphs did it; and they were truth-and-human-insight paragraphs with a News-slant. Let the student columnist find the moral if he can, and apply it if he will.

Columnist Howe, in middle life, retired with an ample fortune. That seems to answer the question: Can a funny column support a newspaper circulation? After his retirement, the column was continued as good as ever by younger men and women who had learned Ed.'s knack, had got at the science of the thing by working under him. This disposes of the question: Is there a science of paragraphing, and can it be taught?

When the column on the Atchison Globe rose shining in the West, the New York editors sought the services of Mr. Howe and offered him a fabulous salary. But he preferred to stay where he was.

Having showed the advantages of writing the human-insight slant at the news, we now take up the less effective forms of News-slant Paragraphs.

*Memorandum:* The tides of world-news bring strange objects to the surface for a passing moment, such as "near-beer," "cooties" and the "Hymn of Hate." The Paragrapher must shoot quick, with any weapon that comes to hand.

*Examples:* The man who invented "near-beer" was a mighty poor judge of distance. — Hype Igoe in New York World.

The colored porter describing Bevo said: "Well, boss, it looks like beer, and it smells like beer and it

tastes like beer. But when it reaches the stomach it 'pears like it LACKS THE AUTHORITY."

These two paragraphs achieved universal circulation owing to the world-wide prohibition movement. They are laughable because they jibe at the defeated enemy (our own baser nature) — defeated in the moment when he thought he was going to get a drink. Yet, good as these jokes were, they were of the moment, and must perish when the news-slant on which they ride sinks again into the depths of oblivion.

Here are some more examples of a quick shot, and a light one — at the passing news:

The battle of Menin road is on, and the soldiers are keeping their talcum powder dry. — B. L. T. in Chicago Tribune.

A gasolene war, now that prices are rising, is said to be imminent. Ho! for the stormy petrol! — Franklin P. Adams in New York Tribune.

The Kurds are again massacring women and children in Persia. If there is any race in whom the milk of human kindness seems to have soured entirely it is the Kurds.

The Geneva Convention forbade the use of mushroom bullets because they are as deadly as toadstools.

"Harry Ward of Du Quoin has charge of Mayor Thompson's campaign." Fine! And who will have charge of de quoin?

Another girl kissed by LaFayette has just died at the age of 103. Kissing may be unhealthy, but every miss that that Frenchman bussed lived a hundred years.

*Soviet* rule, Trotsky admits, soon put Petrograd without bread. Soviet; and-*so- ve-didn't-et.* — "and History, with its volumes vast, hath but one page."

These slants at the news, while they are light, yet have a pleasing quality. "Mennen's talcum powder," "sour Kurds," "de coin," "when do we eat" and similar references are funny. Certain things need but to be mentioned or suggested to constitute a wheeze, in the estimation of the public. Just why a reference to spaghetti, pretzels, corn liquor, limberger cheese, money, drink, married life and a score of other subjects is regarded by the mob as humorous will be explained in a separate chapter, if we don't forget about it. At present we merely mention these facts as the source of whimsey in the News-slant Paragraphs quoted.

*Memorandum:* Subject matter has much to do with the success of topical Paragraphs.

Here are a number of Paragraphs that fail. They are of the light kind quoted above, but the subject matter is not the kind that takes hold.

The Tribune says that a British paper is to be printed in Cologne. That is much nicer than printing in ink, I dare say!

I see where Central Park has become the central point of interest for the men from the Central Office working on that $10,000 safe robbery.

They say any old port in a storm. But that bank robber just sent up for ten years evidently misbelieves in the proverb. He hails from Freeport.

Two noted surgeons have sailed for France on the George Washington. If they are going to operate on the League of Nations, it is well to take along the best.

Brooklyn strikers attacked some workers who would not quit, but insisted on continuing their labors in a fur factory. From all accounts the fur just flew.

These examples show that it is quite possible for a paragrapher to write slants at the news that are not amusing. The subject matter was not worth while. Added to that, the paragraphs are clumsily put together. Look at that last one again. What happened was this:

Fur workers in a Brooklyn factory were attacked by strikers. Here was one fight that literally "made the fur fly."

RULE 4: Even in writing nonsensical Paragraphs every word must be weighed and then chosen or rejected. The words that aren't *for* you are *against* you.

*Memorandum:* It is hardly worth while to try to base Paragraphs on such slight subjects as an English paper in Cologne, a bank robber from Freeport, two naval surgeons sailing on the President's transport, or a fist fight among factory workers. Subjects that all men talk about are the subjects for the Paragrapher, not little sideshows that no one cares about.

The war brought the subject of Britannia's sea power to the attention of everybody. And finally the pestiferous "cootie" broke into the news. After the war it was spirits and the ouija board.

Among hundreds of paragraphs on sea power, we select this example:

> The British flag still waves
> In spite of U-boat ghouls:
> Britannia rules the waves,
> While Tirpitz "waives the rules"

The spirit-seeking of Sir Oliver Lodge was responsible for this Paragraph:

> A happy home for the spiritualistically inclined, according to frivolous Hortense's expert notion, is where one can have ouija board and Sir Oliver Lodgeing. — R. P. M. in the Springfield (Mass.) Union.

The advent of the cootie brought out this passing wheeze:

> Now we know why that great soldier, Napoleon, always stood with one hand in his shirt.

These jokes rule for a day and then pass forever. They are based on subject matter that is ephemeral: when the subject dies, the jokes—we almost said the "jokes die" with it. They don't. The jokes are like the fleas on a dog. When the dog dies, they are in the market for *another* dog. And so, when one news subject dies, the jokes bestir themselves and swarm onto some other topic.

The pungent Paragraph is but a flea bite; it tickles the dog while the dog had his Day. The jest is timely, and it must fall before the scythe of Time. Compare the cootie joke about Na-

poleon's hidden hand, with this one by Oliver Herford that will endure:

NAPOLEON

(From "Confessions of a Caricaturist.")
I like to draw Napoleon best
Because one hand is in his vest,
The other hand behind his back,
(For drawing hands I have no knack.)

CHAPTER IV

## THE EPIGRAM

THE Epigram is of two kinds. One is for the ear — a sort of try-this-on-your-piano affair. It sounds pretty good, but there's not much sense to it.

*Examples:* "He who gets bit becomes bitter." "Those whom we owe become odious." "The man who can't make good is in bad" "George Washington, who refused a glorious third term was the originator of the Glorious Fourth." "Many a nincompoop pays an income tax."

The second type of epigram hands a bouquet to the ear and delivers a ton of common sense to the heart. Here it is:

*Examples:* "Publishing a book of poems and then expecting fame is like dropping a rose petal down the Grand Canyon and waiting for the echo." "Democracy is a great ideal that aristocrats are forever dying for." "An idea is not always to blame for the people who believe in it." "Diplomatic relations are like poor relations — you never hear of them except when they're broke." "Your enemies caused your downfall; but who caused your enemies?"

There is truth in these epigrams to slap you; they give a pleasant shock. Few persons like to

be shocked; hence these are for the few. But a Columnist ought not to write for the Few. Of course the Few are nice enough people, they're all right and all that sort of thing; but the great objection to writing for the Few is that there are too darn few of them! A good man can always make a hit with the Few, but the Few can never make a hit with the Box Office or the Circulation Manager. There aren't enough of them . . . darn it all.

We return to a consideration of the Epigram that pleases the Many. It is, of course, the ear-tickling kind. Why is it more popular to tickle the plain man's ear than his understanding? For the same reason that it is better to tickle a donkey's ears than his heel. He has big ears and small feet. If you tickle his ears you've tickled the greater part of him. If you tickle his heel you get a kick for your pains.

The ear-tickling epigram may be entirely meaningless as in the following cases:

The remotest idea — alighting on the Pole with an airship.
One chants amid a thousand — a solo at the opera.
Rolling your own — trundling your baby carriage.
Living expenses — unmarried daughters.
Greatness thrust upon him — the small boy forced to wear Dad's cast-off trousers.
An author's return to his earlier style — wearing his last year's suit.
Always running behind — the sprinkling cart.
Loose change — out of her tight skirt into a kimona.
The light fantastic — red fire.
Some writers repeat by rote the rot others writ.

By living on the outskirts of the town we avoid the bustle of the city.

The tire that is punk gets a puncture; and it becomes junk at that juncture.

All are forbidden to destroy the handiwork of God, save the King.

Idle gossip attracts the busybody.

Each one of us must bear a cross, even the comedian who can't get across.

Pursuing the even tenor of our way we all come to base uses at last.

Compliments we sometimes pay to conceal the grudges we owe.

Many a train of thought is just a string of empties.

Unconfirmed rumors are started by a confirmed liar.

Philosophy is just one darned think after another.

As a way of correcting children spanking still takes the palm.

When a father threatens to whip his son a cloud appears on the young man's horizon about the size of a man's hand.

The man unqualified for the job doesn't make an unqualified success of it.

Man sets up the drinks; drinks upset the man.

A study of these epigrams will reveal that they are aimed at the ear and not at the intelligence. One phrase is played up against another; and the sense of sound weighs their elements carefully. Hackneyed phrases like "a return to his earlier style" are used with a new application. It is like salting mouldy hay so that a cow will eat it when she refused it before. The ear is tired of these old phrases: but here they are spiced up anew and thus they are palatable. But the calories are not there. No vitamines. An intelligence fed on this provender and nothing else would starve to death

in twenty-eight days. This is devitalized mental food. The idea germ has been milled out of it. To use a slogan that the whiskey men invented (they don't need it any more), "There isn't a headache in a barrel of it."

RULE 5: The Epigram should appeal more to the sense than to the ear.

*Example:* As creeds grow more and more liberal, hell keeps getting narrower and more exclusive so that few can now get into it.

To read that one by ear is like devouring a lobster with your eye. You get a lot of color all right, but you are going to miss a lot of meat unless you crack the shell and lay tongue to it. The samples that preceded this were ear-ticklers; this one is a soul tickler. The ear-tickler you forget at once; this one you will remember. There is a laugh in this Epigram like the victor's laugh at his fallen foe — a jibe at our dead past — at the man who digged a hell for his brother and fell in it himself so often that he finally closed the thing up for his own sake.

*Memorandum:* It is possible to combine the ear-tickling phraseology with the meaty content.

*Example:* The fast cure usually results in a speedy recovery.

This epigram tells an eternal truth. Overeating is the cause of nearly all disease. Most diseases are harbored by women — as men haven't time to be sick; they've got to work. After a woman

finds a doctor that she likes, she *never will* get well. When the fickle young M.D. finally tires of Dulcinea, he tells her that his drugs can do her no good; that the only thing for her to do is to go home and lay off the food for a couple of days, take a dose of salts and be well. Take it from us, that cures them. It cures them quick. And that's the little vein of comedy lying behind the polished epigram: "Fast cure — speedy recovery."

Here are some more of the same kind:

The stupid listener's darkest hour is just before it dawns on him.

A joy ride is the "pursuit of happiness" at ninety miles an hour.

Often you can make an opponent see things in a different light by giving him a poke in the eye.

*Memorandum:* It doesn't pay to try to make this kind of epigram. Hollow phrases is all you get ninety-nine times out of a hundred. Beware of these phrases as you beware of puns. Trail the IDEAS and the pretty words will take care of themselves.

Notice how simple the idea is in the list of epigrams that follow. They seem so simple as not to be worth mentioning. Yet they have been high lights in the newspaper reader's day and have helped to place their authors in a class with Æsop, the fabulist, and Solomon, the wise.

A man going through a train looking for a seat hasn't got sense enough to take the first one he finds. (This is one that Solomon overlooked because there were no commuters in his day.)

A man will boast of his cool union underwear and of his hot Southern blood, both of which are greatly exaggerated.

Poetry is the clinking of a couple of unexpected coins in the shabby pocket of life. — Don Marquis.

Free Verse is not a new form of poetry any more than sleeping in a ditch is a new form of architecture. — G. K. Chesterton.

A critic isn't always a person who has tried to do it and failed. Sometimes he is a person who feels too darned superior to try to do it. — Don Marquis.

"Placing the blame" always ends the controversy if you place the blame on *yourself*. — Arthur Aull.

The man who gets into the spot light by accident soon finds that the spot light has moved again. — E. W. Howe.

"Nobody understands you." But they're not hired to understand you.

Rip Van Winkle is the only fellow who ever woke up and found himself famous merely because he had been asleep.

If you're so nearly beaten that you have to wait for the official count, don't wait for it.

Friendship is not the reason why men approve each other. But mutual approval causes men to become friends. — Mencken and Nathan.

Poetry is not what a poet creates. It is what creates poets. — Don Marquis.

I don't want that people should say, "Izzy Kaplan was a good feller when he had it." I want that they should say, "Izzy Kaplan is a good feller and he's still got it." — Izzy Kaplan.

You're a real orator if you can talk a half soused man into going home before he gets completely paralyzed.

The man that can control himself owns a slave that will do more for its master than the Slave of the Wonderful Lamp. — Tom Tampion.

The one good thing about me is my opinion of myself. — E. W. Howe.

History is so unreliable that I am inclined to think that much of the stuff that I relate about feats in boyhood is a mass of lies. — E. W. Howe.

Everybody has a scheme by which other people could become rich. — Arthur Aull.

Touch the positive end of a truth against the negative end and you get a spark, which is a paradox. — Don Marquis.

Of course, the people could go and mine their own coal. And we suppose an elephant might raise his own peanuts. — Don Marquis.

Greek tragedy is the sort of drama where one character comes in and says to another: "If you don't kill mother I will."

Between his collar button and the sidewalk he is the biggest lawyer in Indiana.

An actor told me that my writing would sound more modest if I used only the third person. I told him that if he would appear on the stage only in the third person I'd write my column in the third person.

I don't think Shakespeare wrote those plays. My theory is that they were written by some other man of the same name. — Artemus Ward.

I never argue against a success. When I see a rattlesnake sticking his head out of a hole, I steer off to one side and I say: "That there hole belongs to that there snake." — Josh Billings.

There was a time when we were too modest to mention legs. A girl had two limbs, a table four limbs, and a centipede — why a centipede was an impenetrable forest. — Renée Dawn.

A happy marriage is like fame. Everybody tries for it and a few think they've reached it, but the skids may be put under them at any minute.

Printing is the art preservative of art and war is the art destructive of art.

We all admit that the acrobat has muscular powers quite beyond us. But we never dream that another man has brain power beyond us. When he

leaves us at the post in the mental race, we holler: "Arrest that speed maniac; he's crazy."

Pugilists post forfeits to "insure their appearance." But why should a dog-nosed, tin-eared, dish-faced prize fighter care a nickle's worth about his *appearance?*

This last one, of course, is not a true epigram. It is a double play on the meaning of the word "Appearance." We just ran that one in for a joke. Jokes, jokes; what would life be without jokes? asks Hermione. At the close of every chapter we ask ourselves: "Have we made jokes of ourselves in this chapter, or have we failed?"

CHAPTER V

## PARAGRAPHS THAT JINGLE

THE Paragraph often has heightened effect when rhymed. The rhyme emphasizes the word just as the pun does. But the pun, as we have seen is "quite impossible" in literary circles, while rhyme is still possible, although among the new poets, highly improbable "Rhyme is too confining for the modern spirit which would breathe the free and rarified air of the upper reaches," writes Fothergil Finch. He also says that rhyme makes the poet say what he doesn't want to say.

About that "breathing-the-rarified-air," it occurs to us that Fothergil may be right. The rhyming poets of America's early days died young — and from the lack of rarified air. Tuberculosis was the poet's scourge, and ninety per cent of the bards famous in the forties — the eighteen forties, died in their twenties. Rhyme proved too confining, and the White Plague did the rest.

The *vers libre* poets evidently are getting the upper air, for none of them has weak lungs. They can "holler like a Mississippi bullfrog."

But we take issue with Mr. Finch in his declaration that "no honest man can write in rhyme be-

cause rhyme makes the poet say what he doesn't want to say." Nothing can make an honest man say what he doesn't want to say. The torture of a thousand heroes in a thousand movie melodramas shows that no pressure that devils can apply will make an honest man say "Uncle." Certainly rhyme can't make him say "Uncle." The only thing that rhymes with "uncle" is "carbuncle." And poets don't write about carbuncles. They write about asphodels.

However we know of cases where the search for a rhyme has led newspaper poets to falsify real facts. Old Tom Going, a road mender in rural Missouri, accidentally set off a stick of dynamite. The poet of the Humansville "Star-Leader" couldn't rhyme dynamite, so he substituted the word bomb and thus told a falsehood about the incident. Here is his rhyme:

Old Tom Going,
Once not knowing —
  Set a match to a bomb;
Folks out hoeing,
Saw old Tom Going
  Some!

Rhyme emphasizes the words that hit, just as the funny falls of the comedian are "caught" by a crash on the base drum. Take this news item: When the Scotch regiments appeared in their kilties, the French soldiers were dubious of their fighting qualities. These doubts disappeared when the Scotch went into action.

*Example:*

THE ALLIES

The Frenchman faces shell and ball,
In pants as red as flame;
The Scotchman wears no pants at all,
But he gets there *just the same.*

The Poet-Paragrapher is like the orchestra drummer, he catches the funny falls on the tom-tom of rhyme. A dispatch said that Emperor Franz Joseph who started the World War shed tears as he signed the order of mobilization. *Well, if he didn't want to fight* (the Paragrapher asked) *why did he fight? And if he did want to fight, why didn't he act like an Emperor instead of a cry-baby?*

Put in this form it took forty words to say it. In the form of a jingle it takes twenty-four. Sixteen words are saved, or nearly half. This brevity gives added snap, and a further effect is gained by the emphasis of the rhyme.

*Example:*

THE DEATH WARRANT OF THE INNOCENTS

Franz Josef wept when he consigned
The boys to Death, the Reaper.
Sizing the emperor up, we find
That he's one grand old weeper.

RULE 6: Rhyme gives emphasis to a Paragraph. The verse form also makes for variety on the printed page.

Following is a considerable list of rhymed Newspaper Paragraphs, some of them based on puns,

most of them based on ideas and many of them, pure nonsense:

EXCITEMENT AT SEA

"I hear the roar of guns afar!"
Cried nervous Sailor Gotch;
He merely heard another tar
Wind up his dollar watch.

HUMANITARIANISM

"Small, Hot Bullets Give Little Pain,"
Is a headline that I treasure:
And I might add it's rather plain
That they can't give much Real Pleasure.

THE DISILLUSIONED PROHIBITIONIST

The booze is gone. But now the strife
Becomes a fight for victuals!
By Golly! 'Tho we're beerless, life
Ain't yet *all beer and skittles!*

RED INK

The rusted pen cried out, "Alas,
The whole darn tribe is dry;
Except my fr'en, the fountain pen,
He . . . *laid in* a supply!"

THE HONEYED HUN

(Bernstorff says: "Be sweet to the Americans, they're loaded with something in both fists.")

A Gloomy Gus was Mister Hun,
He grouched at us and every one;
We swatted Gloomy Gus with vim,
Now FORCE has made him SUNNY JIM!

### OTHER TIMES, OTHER CUSTOMS

We "tripped the light, fantastic toe"
In olden days. Now bolder,
We dance the shimmy — that is, shake
The light, fantastic shoulder.

### PAPER PROFITS

On paper he could figure out
A profit raising chickens,
Ream after ream, the good old scout
Went ciphering like the dickens.

But oh, the schemes of men and mice,
The slip 'twixt lip and cup,
The doggone paper rose in price,
And ate his profits up!

### OUT OF CHARACTER

Santa with a white beard, standing in the store,
Smiled at the kids; he was paid to play the part.
He smiled on the ladies, though, a darn sight more —
Gray bearded Santa with a young man's heart.

### RESTRAINING THE COLORED TROOPS

The captain cried: "Cease shooting, please,"
But couldn't stop the chaps:
It was the troop of Senegalese,
And they were shooting craps!

### WHAT OUR FOREFATHERS FOUGHT FOR

"The Patriots," said Van Bibber Tee,
"Bled in a hundred fights,
To gain for us LIFE, LIBERTY
And the Motion Picture Rights."

### ARMED PEACE

Believing "armaments mean peace,"
They kept the cannons loaded;
But when the war spark found release
Their *theory exploded!*

### FATAL ALLIES

Old world alliances keep peace
Till war sets up his din;
Then — leagued to help each other out —
They helped each other in.

### MATHEMATICAL MARKMANSHIP

They aim the giant guns at will
By figuring geometry;
They do not pull the trigger till
They pull the trigernometry.

### THE PEACE TREATY WRITER

New treaties now are daily facts.
Bill Bryan writes 'em. It's a puzzle,
How with a drop of sealing wax
He seals the cannon at the muzzle.

### THE DEBACLE

The boy that fought the bumble bees
Retreated feeling sickly;
He stood no chance with foes like these;
They mobilized too quickly.

### CHOICE OF OCCUPATIONS

I'd hate to be a fireman who,
With flaming death must flirt;
And there are things I'd rather do
Than be a soda squirt!

ELECTRIC SIGNS

"Give us a sign in the sky," men cried,
When prophets preached on the mountain side.
Today the city-penned millions pine
For a bit o' God's sky *without a sign!*

And so we have considered the Newspaper Paragraph in its various forms. We have condemned the Punning Paragraph as something despised by the sophisticated few. And yet the *intelligentsia* as they call themselves often stoop to puns. Hugh Walpole, criticizing H. G. Wells for becoming a preaching novelist said: "As Esau sold his birthright for a mess of pottage, Wells has sold his soul for a pot of message." The punning instinct will not down, and occasionally, as in Walpole's instance, the pun is an epigram. But the great masses of puns and punsters are senseless. The common man does not seek ideas. The soldiers in France did not try to learn French and German. They merely battered the words into puns. *Tres bien* became "trays beans," although there is no connection in ideas, merely a slight similarity in sound. *Centimes* became "sentiments"; *Pfennige* became "finnigans." The town of Aignay-le-Duc was christened Agnes the Duck, and the German watering place, Bad Bertrich was known as Bad Bertha.

In the summing up, then, we find that puns are proper fodder for the millions, but they damn you with the few who know good stuff when they see it. And those who know good stuff when they see it

are the ones who have the awarding of the silver cup for the best jokes of the year. Therefore, if you wish to rise in the world of Newspaper Humor, write the paragraph that has no pun.

CHAPTER VI

## THE HUMOROUS EDITORIAL

We have now written a book about the Paragraph. And we hope some reviewer will write a paragraph about the book. Next comes the Humorous Editorial. This type of editorial is usually based on some delicious fallacy; some theme which seems to be fair enough when all dolled up with arguments like Anna Held in her symmetricals, but which when stripped naked in the form of an epigram is seen to be as false as it is fair.

*Example:* Every man doubts his own artistic judgment, and he is therefore eager to praise what the other fellow admires.

This is not true. The truth is, that every man backs his own judgment against the world. Look at the defunct magazine that used to call itself The Masses. The highest circulation it ever had was some thirty thousand. As many people as that all live in one block in Hester street. But the Masses's readers didn't live there. They weren't that kind of masses. They were scattered along Riverside Drive and other fashionable residence districts throughout the country. They were

half-baked aristocrats of the type of Hermione and Fothergil Finch. And there were fewer than thirty thousand of them in the United States of America. Now the SATURDAY EVENING POST is another magazine of which many have doubtless heard. It circulates more than two million copies a week. Monthly it reaches nine million, which nine million readers far outnumber thirty thousand. The editors of the MASSES, had they used any judgment, could have seen that the SATURDAY EVENING POST with its nine million copies a month was reaching the masses. But no; they declared that the SATEVEPOST'S nine million were "the few," and that their thirty thousand were "the many." They wanted to be the masses, they styled themselves the masses, and they believed they were the masses. Their judgment of what constituted a mass they put up against the massed judgment of mankind. This disproves the statement that "Every man doubts his own artistic judgment and is eager to concur in the judgment of the other fellow." The MASSES went to its grave still believing it was the masses. It was like the young county chairman in Bryan's first campaign. His name was Jim Heartbeet, and he was for Bryan heart and soul. If Bryan should lose, the People were ruined. On the night of the election, the big-hearted county chairman was shocked at the returns. Half paralyzed with despair, he staggered to the telegraph office and penned this message to Bryan: "My county has

gone for McKinley by 300. The people are in the *minority!* God help us." Well, that's the way it was with the MASSES and the Middle Classes in America. The great MASSES numbered hardly a corporal's guard. They were hopelessly in the minority. The Favored Few were numbered by the millions!

This disproves the statement that a man will accept the artistic judgment of the other fellow — even though the other fellow be the vast majority of mankind. Then if this theory is not true — and it is palpably false, to make it sound true would be a jolly dodge. And just such dodges — such comic sophistries — make the best themes for Humorous Editorials.

This theme: that the highbrow accedes to the artistic taste of the lowbrow, while the lowbrow eagerly endorses the artistic dictum of the highbrow — is treated in the following editorial by Simeon Strunsky. It appeared in the N. Y. Evening Post. Note that the paragraphs are not a mere series of epigrams that could stand by themselves. They derive their force cumulatively as they advance the false argument. And this false argument ends in a conclusion which is undoubtedly true. Read:

> True democracy in art results from the conflict between the highbrow and the lowbrow. The way to tell the real highbrow from the real lowbrow is this: If a man in-

sists that George M. Cohen is in the same class with Shakespeare, you will know that the speaker is a professor of literature. But if a man says that we must abolish commercialism if we are to uplift the present degraded drama, you will know he is president of the Journeyman Plumbers' Association.

If you hear a man say that he attributes his success in life to a faithful study of the Bible and Shakespeare, you will know he is president of the Ad Writers' Club. But if you hear a man say that the film shows today are the greatest force for righteousness, you will know that he is a professor in a theological seminary.

Of course the professor of literature doesn't find any real resemblance between Cohen and Shakespeare. He prefers "Hamlet" in the original folio edition to "Hit-The-Trail-Holliday," but like the good democrat he is he concedes something to the plumber. And the plumber, in boosting Shakespeare has his eye on the professor of literature.

At first glance it looks as if there were no hope for the American drama. But reason argues quite the contrary. Between the plumbers clamoring for Shakespeare and the professors rooting for Cohen, WE SHALL GET JUST WHAT WE NEED.

There's the comic editorial. The conclusion that it comes to — "we shall get just what we

need" — is absolutely true. But the method by which it was proved was rather stretching the point. The effect is funny. We laugh. At whom — and why? We laugh at Simeon Strunsky — Simple Simeon, that he should expect to fool us with his fallacy. We laugh him to scorn. Then we laugh at the professor and the plumber. It is the ill-natured laugh — the only laugh that we concede there is — the laughter of the red Indian burning a man at the stake, the laughter of the stage villian exiting with a chortle after having handed the hero his'n. Our laugh at the professor is a taunt at his sufferings as he stands bound to the stake while Cohen with his roughneck gags jabs his thin hide full of holes. Our merry snort at the plumber is a tribute to his blood-sweating agony as he sits in the torture wrack through the eternity of a Hamlet matinee.

Another theme for the comic editorial is ridicule of some fad, literary tendency or artistic movement. These "movements" are founded on fallacy, and so the comic effect is gained by telling the plain truth about them.

A number of social climbers staged a luxurious "Labor Pageant" in which they posed in tableaux showing the "revolt of the slaves" and other instances wherein the beetle browed toiler rose up and spilled the delicatessen. A comic editorial on this subject would go something like this: (This was written before the days of Bolshevism.)

The devotion to the cause of labor shown by these society pets is like the tendency of the Seventeenth Century poets to write about the sheep industry. All poems dealt with shepherds and shepherdesses. England was a sheep-herding country in those days and the poets boasted that they held the mirror up to nature like an Italian barber showing you a close-up of the latest neck shave. In their London garrets the town-bound bards wrote poems and plays about the woolly sheep, or rather the wild and woolly shepherds and their best girls. Those were the days of the crook drama — the shepherd's crook. Strephon was the name of most of the shepherds (just as all Russians are named Ivan and all porters George). The names of the shepherdesses were Phyllis and Daphne. Doesn't sound much like the sheep fertilizer department of the Chicago Stock Yards as depicted with so much atmosphere in Upton Sinclair's book.

The poets' shepherdesses wore little Bo-Peep costumes of flowered Chinese silk and silver-buckled slippers on feet so small that they could have been shod with the petals of the moss rose. The birds trilled grand opera arias from golden throats; the brook was a sheet of silver, and the feet of the sheep didn't muddy the stream. They stood with manicured hooves like polished pearls on the

porcelain bottom of the pool while they drank the Apollinaris water that flowed there. That was the condition of the wool and mutton industry of the seventeenth century if you believe the poets.

The sort of rhymes they wrote is well typified in this modern imitation by Sara Teasdale:

> Strephen kissed me in the spring;
> Robin in the fall;
> But Colin only looked at me,
> And never kissed at all.

Little went on in the sheep business except an interchange of kisses. Here, for instance, is Daphne wondering why Colin doesn't come around and smack her — everybody else has. Maybe that's the reason.

But the point is: the New York society buds who have taken up the laborer in a serious way, are like the sissy poets who in the Seventeenth Century went to bat against the wool, mutton and tallow industry. They were certainly swinging wild. They didn't know any more about sheep-raising than a hog knows about Battenburg lace. Sheep scab and foot rot were things they never dreamed about. The silk-stockinged Daphne's dancing through their rhymes were about as true to life as a silk-hatted street sweeper in gray gloves and evening dress singing in a flute-like tenor,

"When You Look In The Heart Of A Rose" as he trundles his push cart full of odorous refuse down the curb.

Why do we laugh at that? — that is, those of us who are vulgar enough to do so. We laugh because with our superior wit we can picture the discomfiture of the shepherd poets when brought face to face with a living sheep with all its filth, flat-headedness and fleas. We see a disillusioning, a debacle, somewhat like the one in the old rhyme:

Mary had a little lamb,
And, Oh, how she did love it;
It grew to be a great big RAM,
And they made MUTTON of it.

Poets today are not so artless and naive. The free verse school is rather "free" in its language. Recently a professor set out to make a selection of it for a school reader. He found that none of it was fit for school children to read. The new poet doesn't call a spade an "implement commonly used in gardening." Neither does he call it a spade. He is not content to refer to it as anything less than a "dung fork." The world is becoming entirely too sophisticated. This suggests an idea for a comic editorial gently poking fun at this tendency:

Stupidity is not an asset to most publicists and professional men, but thank heaven it is still the stock in trade of good old Doctor Watson. If Watson ever got keen enough to

fathom Sherlock Holmes's mysteries he would have to get out of fiction and go back to rolling pills for a living. All the other writers in the world are becoming utterly blasé, and it is indeed pleasing to contemplate the mystification of this good old soul, who in each successive Sherlock story is just as densely childlike and delicious as ever. If Doc Watson ever showed a flash of intelligence, his job would be gone.

Here is one that makes fun of the impudence of newspaper writers and the gullibility of readers:

The Sunday papers carried a story about Queen Ena of Spain. The Queen went into a store to buy a shoe brush. It seems that owing to the high cost of living, the Crowned Heads of Europe are going in for the cash-and-carry system. The clerk was impressed by the beauty of the unknown customer. He handed out a toothbrush, saying: "This ought to be about the right size."

We have heard that story told on every woman of prominence except Barnum's Legless Wonder and Gertrude Hoffman, the bare foot dancer. Women that have no feet and those that wear no shoes do not fit into the logic of this story. But it doubtless goes all right with the Queen of Spain. For she wears boots. And so far as we know, she purchases her own brushes and shines 'em herself.

Here, as usual the laugh is a snort of superiority. We chuckle at the fools who believe that queens buy shoe brushes.

Next is an editorial on the new movement (written in 1914) in the theatre that takes up the innovator's idea and carries it one step farther than he carried it, thus reducing it to absurdity:

> Smaller and smaller grow the play houses as the new art of the theatre advances. The Bandbox with its capacity of 199 was followed by the Little Thimble theatre with seats for only a hundred. Then came Stuart Walker with his Portmanteau theatre, which is the smallest yet. It is carried in the wardrobe trunk when the actors go on tour. It is a collapsible contraption like a Pullman drinking cup. In the words of the poet, Walker's theatre:
>
> Closes as closes the primrose
> When the gates of day are shut;
> Folds up as closes the jack-knife,
> When the piece of plug is cut.
>
> This type of amusement palace recalls the task set for Aladdin. The emperor of China commanded Aladdin, by the aid of the Jin to build a pavilion large enough to shelter the Emperor's army and yet small enough to be held in the palm of a man's hand. The Jin of the Lamp confessed that this was a real problem. The wonderful lamp of

Walker's genius has solved it. He has produced a playhouse big enough to accommodate thousands, yet so small that the actor can carry it with him in his hand satchel. This ought to solve the problem of transportation costs, especially for stranded troups. How appropriately the inventor is named Walker.

The tendency to smaller theatres can hardly go much farther than this without reaching the vanishing point. It will be like the costume of a notorious dancer. Her press agent announced that in her new spring production the dancer would wear less costume than ever before. "How could she?" an editor asked, "Is she going to have a mole removed, or her teeth pulled?"

The tendency toward less baggage and freer motion is not confined to dramatics. It found its first impetus in the automobile industry. A few years ago the streets were terrorized by big touring cars only. Then came the little five-passenger Ford with only room for three. Next was the cycle car with two passengers; followed by the cyclopede which carried only one, and he had to stand up. The next step in this evolution or devolution would be, of course, the type of wheeled carriage requiring two carriages to transport one passenger. That type is already with us; it is the roller skate. To simplify wheels any

further than that would be to get rid of the "running gear" entirely. That happened when the ice-skating fad came in. Summer rinks were artificially frozen so that people could bowl along without the aid of wheels. The next step in the process of elimination was to get rid of the glide entirely. This was accomplished the following winter by the introduction of a patented non-skid rubber sole for shoes. And thus we have seen transportation degenerate from a $5,000 touring car with $200 tires to the comparative simplicity of a seventy-five cent pair of rubber heels.

Will the come-down of the descending theatre reach so far? From the vasty Hippodrome to the collapsible Portmanteau is like our old friend Tipperary, a long way to go. But the distance has been covered. The next step is the pocket theatre housing a single actor. He will use his handkerchief for a curtain, his face for a stage, a cigar lighter for a spotlight, and he will have the scenery painted on his collar and cuffs. Indeed, such a theatre has long existed. It is recalled as the old time Medicine Show. The actor was paid a good salary by the "Doctor" that traveled with him. The actor would stand up in the carriage, take his makeup out of a hat, use the front seat as a dressing room and proceed to give a performance that was hard

to beat. While the crowd still lagged on the scene, the little old crooked-necked Doctor would bob up, and in a voice that was squeaky and wheezy, bark out his challenge that he stood ready to "give $5,000 in gold for any case of acute or chronic trouble of any kind that this medicine will not cure in one to eight doses." The "Doctor" had the asthma so bad that he couldn't really talk, he had to bark like a dog. But this affliction never seemed to trouble the audience or cause them to mistrust the remedy's infallibility.

And so it is with the public which is being enticed by the fellows who are doctoring up the new art of the theatre. Nothing they say or do would seem to call the attention of the public to the quackery and charlatanism which is back of the whole thing.

Notice that this editorial makes use of the News Paragraph, the Pun, the Anecdote and the Epigram. Its basis is a false hypothesis: namely, that the theatre is progressively diminishing in size and is about to reach the vanishing point. The News Paragraph was this: "Smaller and smaller grow the theatres until now there is a playhouse, which, after the show, is closed up like a jack knife and carried by the actor." The Punning Paragraph is this: "The man who walks away with his portable theatre is named Walker." The Anecdote tells of the asthmatic doctor. The

Epigram: "Traveling on rubber has degenerated in our time from the $5,000 car with tires at $200 apiece, to a pair of seventy-five cent rubber heels."

RULE 6: The Humorous Editorial is usually based on a false thesis that can be made to sound convincing, but which, if accepted as a fact, becomes ridiculous.

*Memorandum:* It is not a series of Paragraphs that could stand by themselves. Yet such Paragraphs in the form of News-slants, Puns, Epigrams and even rhymes and Anecdotes are not barred; they may be introduced in their appropriate places without injuring the structure of the Editorial.

We will now ring down the curtain and step out for a cigarette and refreshments. Such of our readers as care to — we invite to do the same, and have the waiter put it all on our check. Personal journalism is the secret of the Columnist's success, and we want to make it just as personal as possible without offending anyone. We use the editorial "we" in this instance so that if anyone accepts our invitation he will have to find the other half of the we or pay for his own drink.

CHAPTER VII

## THE COMIC NEWS STORY

EVERYBODY likes to laugh, but few like to be laughed at. The Comic News-story is like the small boy's brand-new air gun. Whom to shoot it at, is the question. It's a stingeree! Whom shall he sting? Well, the up-shot of it is that he tries it on the dog.

The city editor, with a comic re-write man on his staff is always looking for the dog — that is the man in public life who is willing to be the receiving end of a double barreled discharge of side-splitting buck-shot. Naturally, the public spirited citizen who will offer his hide as a target for the thousand-shooting-air-gun of the copy desk comedian is hard to find. And should you find him once, he would be still harder to find a second time. Kipling says that there have been more men stabbed at head-centers and quietly thrown into the Thames at night for laughing at the wrong fellow than have ever been murdered for any other reason. A writer may "attack, accuse, excoriate and villify" a citizen through the "columns of the public prints" only to find the object of his "wrath" glorying in the unwonted publicity and mounting to new heights of egotism

as he feeds upon the fatness of his notoriety. But laugh at him and you've got to fight!

Man, they say, is the only animal that laughs—except a South American bird called the Laughing Jackass. Who named this bird a Jackass? Man did. Why? Because the bird laughs. This shows that man doesn't want to be laughed at. When a bird bursts out with loud guffaws of merriment, man believes the bird is laughing at him. He calls that bird a Jackass.

The Mule, king of the beasts-of-burden, proudest of all domesticated animals, is held in contempt (when we're far from his heels) and is ill-spoken of behind his back (a long ways behind) because his articulated vocables, when he gives utterance to them, sound suspiciously like the merry ha-ha of derision. In other words we always think he is giving us the horse laugh with Jackass variations. The Mule, in his turn, refuses to be laughed at by man. I once cultivated a fine privet hedge around my home in Arkansas. It was on the "big road" as they say in the South, and browsing mules used to come along and crop the hedge into an unsightly pattern. So I put up a sign which read:

MULES ARE FORBIDDEN TO EAT THIS HEDGE
THIS IS NO MULE PASTURE

Not long thereafter a hill Billy on a one-eyed old gray mule came ambling by. The good eye of the mule picked up that sign and read it without

change of expression. I knew that mule was reading the sign as soon as I saw him stop in the road. Then, in spite of the rider's gee-hawing and sawing on the bridle rein, the old mule shimmied over to the sign, hesitated and reversed. Then he lifted a meditative hind leg, took careful aim and when his hoof detonated, the offensive sign was blown to atoms. I came snorting out of my cottage and demanded an explanation.

"That-all sign," the hill Billy avowed, "must have said something that sort of got old Pompey het up."

"What part was it that he didn't like?" I asked.

"Waal, me — I never could read, my own self," explained the fellow. "But if you will jest name off to me what-all the sign said, I'll be proud to name what part of it the mule didn't like."

"The first sentence said, 'Mules Are Forbidden To Eat This Hedge,' I repeated."

"Waal, that didn't make ol' Pompey mad. He couldn't kick on that. What else did it say?"

"This Is No Mule Pasture."

"Ah, that's what riled this old mule," the rider explained, "that funny stuff. His disposition is sp'iled; he don't like no jocularity. It's been years since I dared to swap a joke with this old mule."

That experience taught me not to essay the rôle of comedian to the lower animals. I had had a previous intimation of it in boyhood. I was petting the abused monkey of an organ grinder.

The creature had been tormented by other boys who had beaten it with sticks and stones until its sad eyes were dripping with tears. I drove its tormentors away, and taking the monkey on my lap began petting it and feeding it peanuts. As the monk was shelling one of the nuts, the kernel eluded it; and the monkey's grimace and comical gesture caused me to laugh. At the sound, the monk forgot my benefactions and flew at me in simian rage. The cuffing and clawing that I got from the offended monkey taught me never to laugh at anybody who was not caged.

RULE 7: The comic ~~new~~ NEWS REWRITE ~~evil~~ man is always a friend of the zoo keeper. He writes his funny stories about the zoo animals and then trusts to the vigilance of the zoo keeper to keep the animals from getting out and getting after him.

*Memorandum:* Another source of josh stories is the press agent and his fool stunts. Editors may ridicule the press agent all they please; he dare not get angry: his livelihood depends on his keeping the good will of the editors.

*Example:* A press agent for a vaudeville act chose a snowy day to stage some action in Central Park. Of course he saw to it that the reporters and camera men were on the spot.

The story was handled differently by the comic man for each of the morning papers. Here is one version, as a sample:

> In a text-book on how to write short stories, several hunches were suggested, among them the following:

You are sitting on a bench in Central Park. A beautiful woman, well dressed and heavily veiled comes up to you and thrusts a note into your hand. The note reads: "Babette is concealed in a secret chamber in the basement of the tower at the lower end of the reservoir.

(Signed) Pandora ASTOR."

This situation and its complications is for the amateur writer to resolve into the plot of a short story. He must explain at last who Babette is — whether a young woman or a pet animal, why she is in the secret dungeon, who Pandora is, and why she thrust the note into the hands of a stranger.

Let us take as a study in plot a situation that actually presented itself in Central Park near the Webster Monument yesterday about noon. The untrodden snow lies some seven inches deep throughout the park.

Ewing Galloway, a fiction writer, was being driven by Jules, his chauffeur, across the Park to the Metropolitan Museum. They had entered the Park at Sixty-eighth street, and the chauffeur at that time had taken note of two taxicabs just ahead of him crunching through the snow. Jules opened the throttle and strove to pass the taxicabs. He drew alongside one of them and saw that it was filled with pretty girls about eighteen years old. Passing on to the next car he noticed that it also was filled with pretty misses. The girls in the taxi were disrobing!

Jules instinctively checked the speed of his car to coincide with the speed of the mystery cars — for this certainly was a mystery, and he would not leave it unexplored. The fixity of the chauffeur's gaze, the bulging of his eyeballs served to attract the notice of his passenger. Mr. Galloway looked where his man was looking. He, too, beheld within the neighboring taxi's semi-darkness the flash of white shoulders and bare arms. He turned to the vehicle behind and stared at it. The young women in that car also were stripping off their street clothes.

The vehicles raced along, the curiosity of Galloway, the fictionist, mounting all the while. What was the meaning of this enigma; what was the plot? This was not a day dream, no hazy nucleus of a half-formed fiction story buzzing through his brain like a mystic moth about the midnight electrolier. No; this was reality; he was awake. It was a snowy morning in Central Park. Two motor cars that a moment ago had been filled with girls in fur trimmed hats and velvet cloaks now bore a freight of beauties that had doffed their hats, skirts and stockings and thrust them under the seats. Again they had seated themselves in the crowded cars, each clad in a single scarlet tunic, throats bare, arms denuded, legs white and shining from hip to heel.

The chauffeur, who, when Galloway first noticed him had "eyes as big as saucers," to use the words of Hans Christian Anderson, now had "eyes as big as mill-wheels."

The taxicabs rounded a bend in the drive and stopped at the foot of a snow-clad slope. The Galloway car stopped too, as curiosity now dominated master and man. What was the meaning of that change of costume, that lightning shift from winter garments to the sultriest habiliments of a summer night? Were these girls a gang of shoplifters closely pursued by detectives — stripping off their finery to "hide the evidence"? Or were they themselves detectives suddenly changing their disguises as Old Sleuth Brady used to do, dodging up an alley to change from a whiskered Rip Van Winkle to a pig-tailed Chinaman and still pursuing the villains who were streaking it up the street a half block ahead of him? Galloway, the fictioneer, would find out for himself.

The cab doors opened and out leaped the young goddesses, semi-naked nymphs in a frost-filled world. On their pink feet were sandals, and at every step the sentient snow kissed with a cold embrace the living marble of their ankles. Hand in hand they ran prancing up the white hillside. The alabaster of their naked limbs mated with the chaste and crystalline snow in a perfect harmony of

line and tone. Around them were the lamp-black outlines of the tree trunks with the tracery of twining twigs blending into the blue, winter sky like leaded glass in a cathedral window. It was a picture, beautiful and amazing, as the young Dianas, without a cry or shudder, gave themselves joyously to the crisp winter breezes and the caresses of the flying snow. The postures of their bodies in this chilling dance looked like Dresden china art groups with the white blanketed earth as a porcelain pedestal.

By the time Galloway had leaped from his car to the sidewalk, two other carloads of reporters and photographers had appeared. A battery of movie cameras and of stills were soon trained on the flying nymphs and "shooting folly as it flew."

A park policeman came along, saw the fairies, and began crossing himself and rubbing his eyes. "It's an educational film," the press agent diplomatically lied to the cop. "The Awakening of Spring," as he pointed to the graceful wood nymphs reveling in the snow. "The department of education is having it done." The poor cop thought it was an educational film. It certainly was a whole college education to him; he was so amazed that he forgot to pinch the offenders. In fact he pinched himself to see if he were dreaming.

The "innocent bystanders" also got a good run for their innocence. They all blushed with a guilty feeling. Mr. Galloway, the writer of fiction plots, felt it his duty to remain until he had unraveled the plot to its last thread. So he approached Miss Marian Morgan, who had charge of the dancers, and she glibly told him that the girls were a group of high school students, members of her physical culture class. She told him the names of the girls and said that what they wore was the Roman running costume.

The bronze statue of Daniel Webster stood nearby, his ear and shoulders padded with snow. He did not turn his frozen face for a single glance at the gauze-clad girls. "I have not sought to pierce the veil," Webster had said in his debate with Hayne, "and see what lies beyond disunion." And as the haughty statue stood there grandly refraining from a single glance at the half-veiled loveliness disporting itself beside him, the thought occurred that the great orator was still true to his policy of not seeking to pierce any veils.

And now the last pose is taken: A Greek temple frieze. And the girls, whose Greek temples are freezing by this time, make a dash for their taxi-cabs. As the wheels crunch homeward they shake and shiver with convulsive chills, donning their street costume

as best they can. They disembark at the Colonial Theatre on Broadway. Yes, the young ladies are doing an act there this week, and that's why this is a mystery story — they don't want *anybody to know it.*

Aside from press agent's stunts, another great source of comic news-stories is to be found in the various "pagan routs," "cubist balls" and other bohemian assemblages that take place every year during the winter season. Puns, Epigrams and Rhymes are the tricks used by the comic reporter to put a bit of levity into his story. Here is an example of this sort of thing:

At that Pagan Ball,
Dancing 'round the hall,
Were Budda and Zeus,
Raising the deuce;
While Venus shimmied to delight them all,
Memnon stepped on the Puppy's tail,
Diana ran up and down the scale,
Playing on the saxaphone a bugle call:
Old Confucius came to see
Cleopatra shake a knee.
Vishnu
Came, too;
Took a chance,
Doing a wicked Hindoo dance;
And thus they all did dance around the hall
At the Pagan Ball.

Bohemia, which had hitherto hibernated at the foot of Fifth avenue, made its great spring drive Saturday night, advancing uptown as far as Fifty-seventh street where it hastily

dug itself in. The Bohemians occupied a crater made by the big guns of the enemy — that is, they held their Pagan Ball in a house formerly occupied, first by Perry Belmont, and later by E. H. Harriman. The property owning class is regarded as "the foe" by the little group of serious thinkers who reside in Washington Square and revolt and revolt until their revolt becomes revolting.

These Pagans are "futurists" and "cubists," that is, they believe that in the future everything will be divided up into squares, circles, cubes and cones. (Keep your eye on the professor now, and remember the squares, circles, cubes and cones.) As far as the squares are concerned, they live in Washington Square. Saturday night's drive carried them to Columbus Circle. Already, you see, the square and the circle have been taken care of. The cubes and the cones remain. Just where the cubes will be overtaken, this writer doesn't presume to say; but when they get as far north as the Bronx, that's where they will find the Cohens.

When the reporter arrived at the Pagan Ball, he was promptly bawled out. He was informed by the caveman at the door that:

"We don't want any uptown rubbernecks sneaking in here to get a cheap eyeful of Greenwich Village beauty unadorned."

The newspaper man denied that he was a Riverside Drive aristocrat; he was "only a reporter sent there to cover the ball."

"Well, we don't want to be covered," protested the Pagan, "we came here to uncover ourselves for the evening."

"Please bare with me," quoted the reporter, adding, "you can — just as well as without me," — etc., etc.

And so, to recapitulate RULE 7: Write your funny stories about horses, dogs and the animals in the circus and the zoo. They have no comeback. Try it on any free citizen and you've got to fight. But you can kid the press agent's yarns. He wants publicity at any price.

It will be noted that in the two examples quoted in this chapter, the element of indecent exposure is big. This produces laughter by shock. It is not humor. But it has the same effect as humor. This effect is seen in the theatre when an actor swears: "You're a hell of a Baptist!" The mild shock to the decencies causes laughter based on hysteria. I have noticed it particularly among rural audiences since stage undress has invaded the provinces. In the film play "Hypocrites" the figure of a girl representing the naked truth stalks through the scenes with a naturalness that is all too vivid. Girls and matrons in the audience inexperienced in the *outre* break out in violent laughter when confronted with the film girl's nudity. This sort of laughter and its causes

should not be confused with the laughter of mirth which is caused by wit and humor.

Sigmund Freud in his volume "Wit And Its Relation to the Unconscious" classifies all kinds of jokes under some twenty heads and then puts on his diving suit and goes down. Someone said of the Germans: "They go down deeper, but they come up muddier." If you wish to know what Freud had when he came up for air, you will find the volume in the library. In this book I am not dealing with the inward explosions and muscle reflexes that cause laughter. I am telling how to write the stuff that causes the inward reverberations. I will let Freud chase the reverberations like the boy dissecting the bellows to find where the wind comes from. The Yanks make war, the Germans analyze it.

CHAPTER VIII

## COMIC VERSE

NEWSPAPER verse should always be written with the Mother Goose method in mind. Few characters, fast action, a quick catastrophe and an end to your jingle.

> Old Jim Crow came riding by;
> Says I: "Old Man, your horse will die."
> Says he: "If he dies, I'll tan his skin,
> And if he lives, I'll ride him ag'in."

There's a complete comedy in four lines. Persons in the drama are three: A negro, a white man and a horse. The negro and his decrepit horse come on the stage as the curtain rises. The white man appears in the second line and makes fun of the negro's sorry steed. "Your horse is going to staves; he'll die under you and be a total loss." The negro with the humor of his race takes the elements of calamity as furnished by the white man and turns them around and shows that there is no calamity possible. If the horse dies, his skin will make shoes to walk in. If he doesn't die, the riding will continue. Few characters (two), fast action (the climax is reached at the end of the second line), a quick catastrophe

(the white man's wit is demolished by the negro's philosophy), and a quick end to the jingle (the negro rides off conqueror in the fourth round and the fight is over).

RULE 8: Newspaper verse should be as simple as Mother Goose. It should talk fast in primary words putting its action over in every line.

*Example:*

THE RICH CAN RIDE IN CHAISES

Me and my mule — Bill's jitney bus
Ran right into *both* of us.
"Jump, jump, jump!" Bill yelled, "You chump —"
*When I* rode mules they made *me* jump."

When I was doing a column on the New York Evening Mail an office boy wrote the following classic:

ADVENTURE WITH A GUM MACHINE

I dropped a penny in the slot,
To get a bar of chocolate — not!
For when I pushed the little lever,
I was *cheated.* Were you ever?
'Round I turned and off I went,
Too game to holler for a cent.

— Stephen, the Office Boy.

Newspaper verse should always tell a story. There are millions of stories to be told:

NIGHT STORM

Ol' *Lightning* blaze to show de way,
While fru de woods he runnin';
And *Thunder*, follerin', holler out:
"I sees yuh; I's a-comin'."

— Frank M. Stanton in Atlanta Constitution.

The habits of the woodpecker which involve the chopping of wood before he gets a worm once suggested a newspaper rhyme:

A WOOD PILE HAND-OUT

The woodpecker flies from tree to tree,
He knocks at the house of the squirrel and bee,
He's a darned old tramp — a-passing by,
Begging around for a piece of pie.

Now see him work — it will do him good
They've set this tramp to chopping wood
That's good law; it can't be beat;
Let tramps chop wood before they eat.

This idea didn't work out well at all. But previous versions were worse. Here's the first try:

The woodpecker sat on an old dead tree,
"He's a tramp and a scamp," said Will McGee;
"He knocks at the bees' and the squirrels' door,
Begging a bite from their heaped-up store.
Knock, knock, knock, hear the tramp bird wrap;
'Hand out a meal to a poor old chap.'
But the wood folk cry to the hobo: 'Boo;
The woodpile waits for the likes of *you*.'
So its rap-tap, chip-chop, chip-chop wood,
Earning a worm that will sure taste good."

This fogs the wood cutting idea with confusing and irrelevant details. Also it suggests something contrary to nature — that the woodpecker eats honey and nuts when he can get them. Another one of the early versions that had this same fault went thus:

Woodpecker, woodpecker up in the tree,
Knock at the door of the squirrel and bee,
Ask for a bite of their laid away stores,
You who are tramping the wide out-of-doors.

What will the thrifty folk answer you? "Shoo!
Yonder's the woodpile for hobos like you.
Work if you'd eat." So the lazy old sinner
Has to chop wood 'fore he gets any dinner.

The failure of these attempts to rhyme a simple idea shows that there are many false steps that must be avoided. The young writer who is content to slur along with these false notes in his hurdy-gurdy will never set the street urchins to dancing. It will be noted that the final version, while it failed to ring true, nevertheless, avoided any direct statement of untruth.

The woodpecker flies from tree to tree. (He does.)
And knocks at the house of the squirrel and bee. (But not as such, he taps because they are hollow, wormy tree trunks.)
He's a darned old tramp — a-passing by,
Begging around for a piece of pie. (Figuratively speaking.)

Now see him work — it will do him good,
They've set this tramp to chopping wood. (They? God and Nature.)
That's good law; it can't be beat;
Let tramps chop wood before they eat. (Pretty weak stuff.)

A comparison between the tapping of a woodpecker and the typing of a reporter was made by an English poet and adapted to the news of the hour — the Foch offensive, thus:

REPORTERS

The reporter sits at his typewriter:
Tap, tap, tap;
Births,
Weddings,
Deaths.
The woodpecker must be a reporter.
Tap, tap, tap goes his typewriter,
Up in the tree,
Death notes he's writing —
Bug epitaphs.

General Foch in the Big Drive,
He's a reporter, too;
With a snappy, explosive style,
Tapping the key positions,
Tap, tap, tap, with artillery,
Brief bits of obituary news
For the big bugs in Kaiser-land.

The simile worked out successfully in this case. The hastiest reader feels the full force of the comparison: wood pecking — type tapping — artillery pounding, all connected with the death of worms. Old familiar stories can be retold with modern embellishments to make Newspaper Verse; the rise of the boy scout movement suggested this:

HISTORICAL HIND-SIGHT

The Babes in the Woods were lost. They cried
They wandered around boohooing;
They finally turned up their toes and died;
Now what were the Boy Scouts doing?

The movies, peanut butter, paper shortage, any object that everybody is familiar with furnishes a subject for popular rhymes:

### UNCLE ABNER CRITICISES THE MOVIES

I can't understand (And I say it with vim),
If he's dying for her and she's pining for him —
If his heart's all in shreds and her heart's all in tatters,
I can't understand the dee-lay in sich matters.
I'd jump on them villains, by golly, and kill 'em,
And grab off the girl in the first foot of fillum!

### PEANUT BUTTER

"Peanut butter, peanut butter!
Yum!" I heard an urchin mutter. ,
Peanut butter from the West,
Where the peanut herds are best,
Where they graze in grassy dells,
In their calm, contented shells,
Where the milk maids' dairy song
Soothes the peanuts all day long;
Where those maidens' hands, like silk;
Woo the strains of singing milk,
While the humpbacked peanuts stand
Grouped around the pasture land,
Chewing their contented cuds,
Stamping flies with turfy thuds,
Waving high a peanut tail,
Like a vicious threshing flail;
And making dairy maidens sick
With a sudden peanut kick!
All the troubles of this ilk
Are the cost of peanut milk —
Sorrows that no tongue can utter
Are the price of peanut butter!

### STRAWBERRY SHORTCAKE ARRIVES

June blew his trump through the garden,
Announcing the summer campaign;
And the red volunteers they responded with cheers,
As they marched in his militant train.

June was the captain of rookies,
  That marshaled the basket brigade;
The strawberry lads said good-bye to their dads
  And marched in his pompous parade.

"Good-bye," sang their sweethearts, the blossoms,
  And the mother leaves echoed "Good-bye,"
As following Mars they went off to the wars,
  Where the truest and tenderest die.

Oh, the charge across Table Cloth Mountain,
  When they poured out their blood in a lake,
When they broke with a scream upon Sugar-and-Cream
  In the battle of Strawberry Cake!

DANCING CRAZE

The Insect Dance at the Mole Hill House
  Was the strangest thing you've seen;
They paired the Japanese Dancing Mouse
  With the Mexican Jumping Bean.
Then the Centipede pushed back the chairs,
  And to everyone's delight,
Matched off his feet into fifty pairs,
  And danced with himself all night!

By writing about objects that are known to all men, the Newspaper Poet may become widely known himself. In that case he will please his public by writing verse about himself. Here are two examples from F. P. A.'s "Conning Tower":

ON EMULATION

(Like Thackeray, he was born in India; like Keats, studied medicine for a time; and like Coleridge, had soldier ambitions.—Publisher's note about A. S. M. Hutchinson author of "The Happy Warrior.")

Like Finley Peter Dunne, I lamped the light
  One morning in Chicago, Illinois;
And yet the spanless distance from his height
  Is just as great as when I was a boy.

Like H. G. Wells, I once engaged in trade;
Like him I went and married me a wife;
A parsnip for the difference that made!
I never wrote a novel in my life.

Like T. Carlyle, I find it hard to sleep;
I'm no misogynist — neither was Moore;
Like Hood, I suffer sailing o'er the deep —
Yet nil the dent I make in Litrachoor.

Like Chesterton, I'm tardy with my stuff;
Like Poe, I hate to labor very long;
Yet all I do is this Facade of Fluff.

. . . . . .

There must be something radically wrong.

DO YOU KNOW?

I shot a pome into the Tower,
It showed acumen, skill and power;
Yet no one grabbed me by the hand
To say: "Old kick, your stuff is grand!"

But some one went to work and wrote:
"Dear Sir: You are a rotten pote";
Another said: "You have no style";
Another: "My, that verse is vile!"

And so I thought: "Why slave and strive
To be the greatest bard alive?
I'll write without the slightest care
For words and rhythm and rhyme — so there."

Whereat I did a slipshod rhyme
And said: "To print it were a crime."
'Twas printed . . . And the public swore
As roundly at me as before.

Note in the poem "Do You Know?" — how the suspense is carried to the last line. You do not know in the line before how the contest between the poet and the dull-witted public will

turn out. This trick of a surprise ending is characteristic of F. P. A.'s comic verse. He uses it as successfully as O. Henry does in the short story. But beware of trying to imitate this as hundreds of F. P. A.'s imitators do. A young pup with old tricks is more tiresome than the proverbial task of teaching an old dog new tricks. Someone has said: "The hardest thing about teaching an old dog new tricks is to think up any new tricks to teach him." It is the young cub's problem to think up his own tricks. Certainly this trick of surprise becomes no trick at all if everybody does it. When you expect a surprise you are not surprised to find a surprise.

There are other forms of humor, for instance the artless devil-may-care that projects itself in Don Marquis's attitude:

NOTHING TO IT

I do not work in verse or prose,
I merely lay out words in rows;
The household words that Webster penned —
I merely lay them end to end.

— Don Marquis.

To this satirical challenge an interested contributor replied:

WORD MAGIC

You take the words that Webster penned,
You merely lay them end to end,
But as they shuffle in the dark,
Word touches word and throws a spark,
And blind words flash and glow and glint
As when cold steel hobnobs with flint;

You lay out words as dark as night,
Then knock their heads and there is light!

Yes, end to end like dominoes,
You lay the syllables in rows,
You mix those words into a swarm,
They kiss and hiss and they get warm,
They weave, they glow, they flash in flame.
And you, not Webster, are *to blame!*

CHAPTER IX

## THE SUNDAY FEATURE

THE Golden Age of the Sunday Feature in comic journalism was in the '90's when S. S. McClure decided that George Ade and Finley Peter Dunne were too good for the limited field of Chicago, and syndicated "Fables in Slang" and "Mr. Dooley" for the benefit of Sunday papers throughout the United States.

The form of the Sunday feature is not the essence of it. A luminous, witty mind makes the feature — it *is* the feature; and the form, whether a fable, a dialogue, a block of rhyme or a monologue serves merely as a basket in which to deliver the pippins.

George Horace Lorimer, who, in the Dooley period won national fame, chose as the medium for his humor a series of letters from a wise old merchant to his son. He used the straightforward monologue style with here and there a "dog story" to illustrate his point. The "Introduction To All Introductions" at the front of this volume is an excellent example of his method.

RULE 9: In writing features, tell a story.

*Memorandum:* Æsop spun fables, Jesus told parables, Lincoln whipped out an anecdote to clinch every argument. The biographer of George Washington found no anecdotes and had to fake one; so today the only thing that everybody knows about Washington is that he cut down a cherry tree — and he didn't.

Lorimer larded his "Letters" with frequent anecdotes, and the rest of the matter consisted in wise observations like the following:

Percy's old dad was through with the proud popper business forever, and the young man's pleadings found him as full of knots as a hickory root, and with a hide that would turn the blade of an axe. Percy was in the fix of the skunk that stood on the track and humped his back at the 20th Century Limited — there was nothing left of him but a deficit and the stink he had kicked up.

The whole truth is necessary. It's nice to be told that the shine on your shirt front is blinding the floor manager's best girl, but if there's a hole in the seat of your pants, you ought to know that, too, for sooner or later you've got to turn your back on the audience.

The man who lives beyond his means trying to bluff his neighbors is like the fellow who puts a fancy vest over a dirty shirt, he's the only person in the world who can't see the egg spots under his chin.

Most women try to prove their love by talking about it, and most men by spending money. But when a pocket book or mouth is opened too often, nothing but trouble crops out.

Few young people go into marriage with any real idea of what it means. They get their notion of it from the moonshine where they court or from

the rosy clouds where they have their heads when they are engaged, or from novels, which always end just before the real trouble begins.

If you don't have leisure you can't be very unhappy. Most of the troubles in this world are imaginary, and it takes time to think them up.

The best woman in the world begins trying a man out before she's been married to him twenty-four hours, and unless he can smile over the top of a four flush and raise the ante, she's going to rake in the breeches and keep them.

A good cook, a good wife and a good job will make a good home for a man anywhere; but you add your mother-in-law, and the first thing you know you've got two homes, and one of them is being run on alimony.

Old maids are usually the girls who were so homely that they never had an offer, or so good looking that they carried their matrimonial corner from one option to another till the new crop came along and bust them.

When you deal squarely with a crooked man you scare him to death because he thinks you're springing some extra-deep game on him.

Tell a man that his morals are so bad that he needs to get religion and he'll still be your friend; but tell him his linen is dirty and that he needs to take a bath and you've made a mortal enemy.

. . . I modestly slipped away from your mother-in-law leaving her leaking brine and acid like a dill pickle that's had a bite taken out of it.

This last simile is an example of the vigorous thinking that makes vigorous writing. Contempt for the whining mother-in-law who leaks brine

like a dill pickle that's been bitten — the whole emotion is conveyed bodily to the reader. Lorimer can make you feel any passion that he feels. He does it by "dramatizing" his arguments. With simile and with personification he makes his editorial "talk" like Æsop's fables. Study this extract from an editorial in the Saturday Evening Post, and note how simile and metaphor are used continually:

> The basic reason for the mess the politics of this country is in at the present time is that no considerable number of Americans have ever had the nerve or taken the time or appreciated the necessity of lining up the political bosses against the wall at sunrise and shooting them full of the obvious facts of the situation . . .
>
> There have been an earthquake, a fire, a flood, a cyclone, a blizzard and a drought. In common with the rest of the world the United States of America has been grabbed up by the roots, tossed in the air, juggled about, cuffed, kicked, disorganized, demoralized and slammed back on its props. It is no more the United States it was before July, 1914, than it is the United States it was when the Constitution was adopted. Old conditions have changed. Old theories do not fit. Old procedures are inadequate. Everything has shifted, except the politicians and their politics. Those are of the former and obsolete brand.
>
> Wherefore we observe the politicians making an alleged new deal with a frayed and greasy deck of cards — a frayed and greasy deck, but a cold deck, in which the cards are stacked just as they used to be. And the people — who buy all the chips, who have all the money in the game, who

are the producers, the ones who pay — are sitting round the table, taking their stacked hands, fatuously hoping that the dealer is honest, but always discovering that the professionals show down the four aces on the call.

Why do not the people put in a new, clean deck, shuffle the cards themselves, cut them and deal them as they run? Why do not the people chase the professionals out of the game, destroy the bugs and holdouts, and eliminate the "readers"? Merely because the people are used to taking the cards that are dealt to them and accustomed to putting up all the chips. It is habit. If by chance the people do get a hand that seems to have merit they discover, when they have shoved in all their blues, that the professionals have a lulu that tops everything, and that the house rules permit it once in a game, that once being the one of the moment.

The method of Finley Peter Dunne was to put his editorial comment into the mouth of Mr. Dooley, the saloon keeper of Archey Road. Dooley's brogue and his Irish mannerism helped to flavor the humor, but the humor was there.

"Can a young mon marry on $200?" asked Mr. Hennessey.
"He can if he can get the money," replied Mr. Dooley.

An example of Dunne's cutting satire was the suggestion by Mr. Dooley that the egoistic Lieutenant Colonel Roosevelt who had written a book on the Spanish-American adventure would entitle that book: "Alone in Cuby."

A paraphrase of the Dooley feature by F. P. A. is here given:

## AIRSHIPS

BY OUR OWN MR. DOOLEY

"I see by th' pa-apers," said Mr. Hennessey, "that they're goin' to sta-art to-night."

"Sta-art what?" asked Mr. Dooley.

"Th' airship," said Mr. Hennessey.

"'Tis all one to me," said Mr. Dooley, "Th' airship goes up, and it comes down agin; but th' price iv milk an' ice an' butther an' carned beef all wint up f'r altytood tin years ago an' has been there iver since, soorin', as Hogan says, like a bird iv th' wildherness.

"The first iv August I get a letther from me landloord tellin' me that 'owin' to th' high cost iv labor an' matheryal an' ile-cloth, we regret th' rint fr'm now on an' incloosive as th' case may be will be sixty-two fifty a month instid iv forty-five. P.S. Answer be tillygraft, prepaid, and take all th' time ye want befoor tin o'clock tomorrah mornin' an' oblige.' An' do I stan' f'r such tyranny? I do. I pay th' advance. 'Th' landloord's makin' too much money,' I says to mesilf. An' whin he comes in agin I tell him that owin' to th' scarcity iv spa-ark ploogs, th' delivery thrucks is havin' throuble, so th' beer is fifteen cints a glass. An' he pays it. An' so it goes.

"An' thim airships, says ye? I stopped gettin' excited about thim things whin Walther Willman quit. Over th' ocean in foor days, says ye. Does it rayjooce my rint? It does not. Ye can tillyphone fr'm Detrite to Seattle, an' it goes like this: 'Hello,' says Seattle. 'I can't hear ye,' says Detrite. 'Yes, she's pretty well,' says Seattle. 'What?' says

Detrite. 'I say she's better,' says Seattle. 'About them tin thousand autymobiles,' says Detrite. 'What?' says Seattle. 'Oh, we'll write ye about it,' says Detrite. 'About what?' says Seattle. 'Th' autymobiles,' says Detrite. 'I can't hear ye,' says Seattle, 'why don't ye write to me?'

"No, Hinnissey, th' wondhers iv science is gra-and f'r th' front page, but th' more iv thim we have th' higher th' milk goes."

"Well," said Mr. Hennessey, "some wan has to pay f'r all that gasoline thim airships uses."

"I hope it'll be my landloord," said Mr. Dooley.

Walt Mason does a feature in rhymed slang that pleases millions. Wit is an element in his success, but plain, peasant-minded wisdom is what carries him to the goal. "Good horse sense will take you through," says Riley. La Rochefoucauld declared: "A man may be witty and still be a fool. Not wit but judgment is the basis of wisdom." Good judgment is the common attribute of all the famous Feature writers. The harlequinades in such magazines as "The Masses" are witty. But they perish as fast as they are written. Their authors lack the essential quality of judgment, therefore they lack wisdom. Those witty men are a mile high; their feet never find solid ground; their frantic minds are alien to the mob. All flesh is grass but their's, and they are caviar. It takes grass to bait the bovine herd.

For the following example of Walt Mason's feature we are indebted to Judge.

### PLUG CITIZENS

Bill Shakespeare was a simple wight, from all the tales we hear; he sought the Blue Boar Inn at night and drank ten steins of beer. He gossiped with the other boys about the baseball score and shared with them their humble joys, and ordered two steins more.

Old Bill excelled in deathless song, as we must all admit, and didn't let his hair grow long, to make a Greenwich hit. His neckties were the common sort, if he wore ties at all; "What ho! Bring me another quart!" the tapster heard him call. The tinsmith clapped him on the back, and borrowed 'arf a crown; the sexton cried, "How do you stack, you blamed old scribbling clown?" He was Old Bill to one and all, and he was satisfied; he made no cheap display of gall, put on no "dog" or "side."

And when his day of toil was done he sought the Blue Boar Inn, and there acquired a decent bun, and held that bun no sin.

And doubtless in that Stratford grad there was some other bard, who wrote his verses, beastly bad, and wrote them by the yard. And doubtless this forgotten pote put on all kinds of style, and looked on Shakespeare, as he wrote, with pity in his smile. No doubt he wore a large slouch hat, and Charlie Swinburne beard, and had nine yards of fierce cravat, and poses strange and weird. There always are a lot of jays along the fringe of song, who dress and pose in godless ways, and think they're going strong. They are forgotten ere they're dead, the gold bricks seldom thrive; "When half gods go," Ralph Waldo said, "the sure 'nuff gods arrive." The man who really has the goods thinks modesty is wise, for in his heart he knows the woods are full of bigger guys.

Abe Lincoln never wore a suit that wasn't quite a frost; in all his years he cared no hoot how much his raiment cost. When I behold his pictured hat, I sit me down and cry; I wonder how a lid like that could, anyway, get by. But Abe was just a common man who split his share of rails, and it was evermore his plan to hand out spicy tales.

And while he steered the ship of state through wild and stormy seas, he found his soul's relief was great if he could spring a wheeze. And all around were human squirts who viewed him with despair, and they had diamonds in their shirts, and bear's grease in their hair. And they were men of haughty mien, attired in fashion's tints; their pictures you have doubtless seen, in old and musty prints. They used to sneer at poor old Abe, these men of gorgeous fronts; he cared as little as a babe for heavy social stunts.

And they are ghosts, these stately men, who went their princely way; when we'd recall their names again it takes us half a day.

But Abe still lives, as potent now, as when he used to tell, with unkempt hair upon his brow, the yarn that rang the bell.

The gold bricks make a gaudy show to careless passers-by; four-flushers come, four-flushers go, but merit does not die. — Walt Mason.

Montague Glass in his dialogues of "Potash and Perlmutter" reveals beneath his wit that solid judgment, that plain horse sense that is immortal:

"I see where the Italian delegates to the Peace Conference says that if Italy don't get Fiume, Mawruss, there would be a revolution in Italy," Abe Potash remarked to his partner, Morris Perlmutter.

"Any excuse is better than none," Morris Perlmutter commented, "which it is very clear to me, Abe, that with the example of Poland in front of them, the Italians being also a musical people and seeing that Poland has got it a first class A number one pianist like Paderewski for a president, y'understand, they are taking the opportunity of Fiume to put in Caruso or Scotti or one of them fellers as president."

"They would got to offer their presidents an awful big salary if they expect to compete with the Metropolitan Opera House, Mawruss," Abe said.

"If Poland could do it, Abe, why couldn't Italy?" Morris said, "which Paderewski didn't have to tune pianos on the side to make a living over here neither, Abe, and besides, if they would let Caruso have a free hand in the formation of his Cabinet, he would probably get a good baritone for Secretary of State, a basso for Secretary of Commerce," etc.

. . . . . .

"Say," Morris protested, "If all college presidents would make as good a President as Mr. Wilson done, Abe, I am content that we should have such a president for President."

"President Wilson done all right, Mawruss," Abe declared. "He done a whole lot to add a touch of refinement to what otherwise would of been a very rough war, understand me, he's got the respect and admiration of the whole world, Mawruss, and I ain't going to say *but* neither, but would say, however, Mawruss, for the next ten years or so the United States of America ain't going to be as quiet as a college exactly. Maybe the presidents of colleges will continue to deal with college professors and college students which couldn't talk back, Mawruss, but the next President of the United States will have to stand an awful lot of

back-talk from a whole lot of people about taxes, business conditions, railroads and so forth, and instead of coming right back with a snappy remark originally made by some big Roman philosopher and letting it go at that, Mawruss, he would got to come right back with a plan devised by some big Pittsburgh business man and act on it, too."

"There's something in what you say, Abe," Morris admitted.

"So, therefore, if we've got to draw a college president for President, Mawruss," Abe concluded, "let's hope he would be anyhow president of a business college."

A new humorist with great possibilities was discovered in W. O. McGeehan, a sport editor on the New York Tribune, when he ran a series of monologues based on the wisdom of one Izzy Kaplan, a staff photographer.

When the "wine rebellion" in Michigan was enlivening the press dispatches, McGeehan wrote this account of the news photographer's departure for the battle front:

"I chust dropped in to say goodby," remarked Izzy Kaplan as he flounced into the sporting department. "I am going to Iron Mountain, which it is in Michigan, to choin in the Iron Mountain wine party. It's a big business, and I want to be in on the ground floor. Up in Boston once they had a tea party, and look what happened. They made the United States out of it.

"I got it figgered out that if people could get all excited about a tea party they could get a whole lot more excited over a wine party, which it is got more kick, and you know it yourself. Tony, the boot-

black, which he has got it a cousin out there, says that the Eyetalians would make a big fight out of it, on account they are remembering Garibaldi, which he was an Eyetalian prize-fighter, and Tony would bet me two to one that he could lick Chack Dempsey.

"Maybe they would have to call out the reservers on this business, and I want to be on the chob so that I might become a cheneral, which they get better pay than a second louie, and they could run for Bresident afterwards. I was in the signaling corps in the big war and I could make a lot of signals from Iron Mountain about the wine party.

"It takes a lot of troops to stop a feller from taking a drink. First comes it the news that the cousin of Tony, the bootblack, is going to take it a glass of wine with his spagheetis, which they are Eyetalian noodles. Right away the news comes right into Washington and somebody telephones to Secretary Becker. 'Have you got enough troops to stop it this outrage?'

"Right away Secretary Becker calls out all the infantry from the Foist to the Fifty-foist Regiment and orders them to Iron Mountain, and he says to them, 'My brave boys, the cousin of Tony, which he is in the bootblacking business, is going to take a drink. Stop him at all risks, and if you need it some reinforcing I should call out the reservers and the National Guarders. If that don't stop them we would issue some more bonds and make them buy them. Don't do any shooting till you see the whites of his eyes, if he has any.'

"Pretty soon Secretary Becker would get it the information back, 'We have surrounded the cousin of Tony, the bootblack, but he has the wine in a glass, and it ain't such bad stuff, either. You should send it a couple battleships to reinforce our right flank, because it looks kind of weak in

the knees. I think that the flank is chealous of the cousin of Tony, the bootblack. Confidential, the wine ain't so rotten.'

"Then the Cabinet would meet, if there is anybody left in it, and they would send out the navy to Iron Mountain to stop the drinking of the cousin of Tony, the bootblack. The last news I heard from there is that he would drink it anyhow, and I hope he wouldn't drink it all till I get out there. Those Eyetalian fellers does everything so fast that you couldn't depend on them. I will signal to you from there if anything is left."

CHAPTER X

## THE COLUMN

NEWSPAPERS have so many Columns today that they remind one of the night-prowling negro whose smoke house was investigated by a white neighbor who had lost several hogs. He found eleven hog jowls hanging in the smoke. "Look here, Uncle Pete," said the white man. "You had only one hog, didn't you?" "Yessuh, yessuh. Jest one hawg." "Well, how does it come that there's eleven hog jowls hanging here?" The negro stammered and stalled a moment, and then he said, "Well, you see, boss, I likes the jowl better'n any othah part o' the hawg. So I jest cut mah whole hawg up into jowls." The public seems to like the Column so well that some journals cut the whole paper up into Columns.

The New York Tribune has four distinguished Columnists, F. P. A., Grantland Rice, Heywood Broun and W. O. McGeehan, the latter having demonstrated his worth in his monologues of Izzy. And so the newspaper funny man arrives. His day is here.

Yesterday the "personal journalism" of those old giants, Greeley, the Bennetts, Dana, Watterson

and their like ruled the circus ring of journalism. They made their grand entry on horses and elephants caparisoned in oriental opulence; they rode as rajahs, califs and kings.

Today we see the grand entry of the clowns. Comedy and buffonery run from one end of the paper to the other. "Make 'em laugh!" is the slogan of the publisher. The names of the newspaper clowns obscure the fame of the editor and owner. And thus we find that "personal journalism" is still with us. The opinions of the wit are sought in preference to all others, and newspaper circulation is largely founded upon his cap-and-bells.

As George Horace Lorimer said, "We live on newspaper cocktails and as fast as one dies down the barkeeps of the dailies shake us up another." Since horse racing was abolished and liquor driven to its cyclone cellar, the public has turned more and more to Column reading as a dissipation. Following the Paragraphers, although a milder amusement than drinking and playing the ponies, nevertheless has its advantages; it costs little and there is no hangover. If your favorite Paragrapher blows up in the stretch and fails to put his pun across the tape a winner, you are out only two cents. And you can turn to the Columnist in the next paper and he may prove a two-time winner. No cashier has yet shot himself because he placed a slug of the firm's money on F. P. A., and B. L. T. beat him to the gag.

The qualities that a Columnist may have are many, the qualities that he *must* have narrow down to one. He must have good judgment. He is first of all an editor. An editor whose judgment is good grows and flourishes like the Saturday Evening Post. The editor who merely thinks he's good, busts two or three millionaires, leaves a trail of dead magazines behind him and gets appointed to some political job by a president with a one-track mind. Therefore, if your judgment is not good — and good judgment is the rarest quality in man, or if you think your judgment is good — and this is a sure sign that it is rotten — do not hope to be an editor, much less the editor of a Column. The magazine editor has a hundred shots in his magazine, the Columnist has but one. He is like the Boer farmer who ran out of meat and taking down his rifle set out across the veldt to shoot a wildebeest. His visitor asked him: "Why do you take only one bullet?" "Because bullets are scarce — I can't afford to miss." The Columnist can't afford to miss. As Don Marquis said in explaining why he could not waste his strength writing letters to his contributors: "When my stuff loses whatever freshness it has, I'll be through as a Columnist."

A columnist's public is as fickle as the friends of a champion pug. "He's the greatest man that ever donned a glove," they say when he is winning, "Rome at its grandest never produced such a gladiator." But when the pug goes down to the

rosined canvas and stays there ten seconds — which is not a long time, even in this fast age — his disgusted followers say: "Hell, there *never was* anything to him! Who did he ever lick?" (Grantland Rice says they say: "Whom did he ever lick?") And when the Columnist loses his sparkle, the publisher lops off his head so quickly that when they pick up his body it is still warm.

The Columnist lives in constant dread of being handed his resignation. He feels the cold eye of Frank Campbell of the Funeral Church forever sizing him up. He is like the negro preacher in the old story who was handed his quitting paper by the colored brethren and requested to sign on the dotted line.

"How come this resignation?" exclaimed the pastor. "What's wrong, niggers, what's wrong? Don't I elaborate the gospel? Don't I argyfy? I ax you that? Don't I sputify? I ax you, niggers?"

"Ya-a-s," admitted the brethren. "You argyfy and you sputify. But you doan show *whare-in!*" The Columnist's duty is that peculiar indescribable one. He must show "whare-in." And, as Don Marquis says, when the brethren decide that he has ceased to show wherein, he, at that moment has finished his Column career.

Some persons believe that because the Columnist succeeds so brilliantly at columning, he would succeed more brilliantly at some *other* line of work. That is as absurd as to suppose that the tattooed

lady of the circus who attracts so much attention with her flexible illustrations would be a mighty star in moving pictures.

This fallacy was once exploited by Christopher Morley who declared that Don Marquis would write immortal literature if he could escape from his present connection. To this argument I replied in the following letter:

Dear Don: In writing a tribute to the editor of the Sun Dial old Kit Morley suggests that you would give us more wonderful stuff if you were not "chained to a Hoe press."

I say, Aw rats! He wouldn't give us nothin'! This theory that newspaper writers must be unchained from the Hoe is bunk. Look at Russia; the man was unchained from his hoe there!

They've got to keep you chained or you wouldn't be worth a dang. It reminds me of the time when I was traveling with a Southern circus, attached to the menagerie — as a wild man. They had me dyed red with cochineal, and I wore a pair of ivory tusks or fangs sticking out of my mouth. With an iron collar around my neck they had me chained in front of the sideshow. I was a permanent bally (which is a silent ballyhoo — I couldn't talk, I was a wild man). Kids used to throw peanuts to me to tease me, and the ladies used to shudder and say: "Wouldn't it be terrible if that creature should ever break away!" I used to dash at the crowds, gnashing my tusks (tushes, the natives called them) and the chain would jerk

me up short. This was very exciting while it lasted.

But one day when we were showing on Half Moon mountain, I made my customary rush at the crowd and the darn chain broke. Here was a wild man free of his tether. I had to make good. Amid shrieking kids and fainting women I started to eat up the crowd. A gentleman shoved a gun in my face. I said: "Ladies and gents, I wouldn't harm a fly. I've been feeling kind of playful, but I don't even feel that way any more."

The circus paid me off. No chained attraction is any good after it breaks its chains.

A few years farming on Half Moon gave me time to think it over. I decided that New York was a good place for me to pull my wild-man stuff. I got myself "chained to the Hoe press" of an evening paper as Columnist. Well, the Wild Man From Arkansas was a stunt that went big, and I got to thinking again that I was the real thing.

Some people told me that if I could only break away from the newspaper grind there was no telling what a big dent I might make in literature. Finally I believed it. With a mad rush I broke my chains, and charged with glaring eyes on *belles lettres*. The next reel shows me *farming* again for a living. Sad story.

Here's the idea: some acts go best in chains, and yours is one of them. Houdini had another. Who would have cared a whoop for the Siamese

twins but for the link that chained 'em? How far would Woolworth have got with his ten cent stores if he hadn't run 'em in chains?

As long as the Russian Giant kept his chains, we thought Russia really was a giant. Keep growling is my motto but keep chained, and the world will never know but what you're a wild man.

C. L. E.

The successful Columnist puts his own personality into his column. It is not a case of impersonal jesting and the heaping up of cold, blue-lit diamonds of wit. The reader likes the column because it reveals a daily insight into another man's soul — and he finds this other soul likeable. Mencken says (in his column in the "Smart Set" called "Repetition Generale") that "friendship does not make men approve each other. But mutual approval causes men to become friends." And so the Columnist and his readers are comrades.

Often the Column fan becomes an addict, shameless in his pursuit of his favorite dope. He openly subscribes for two evening papers and does not deny that he wants them both for his own perusal. If a storm delays the delivery of the papers until after bedtime, he tells his news dealer to be sure and save his two evening papers so that he can read them with his morning paper. The newsdealer tells his woman: "'At guy is nutty. Two evenin' pape's, and th' same news in bot' of 'em."

News, nothing. He isn't after the news, he merely tolerates it to get the Column as a barber drinks hair tonic to get the alcohol.

But to the type of rough-and-ready fellow who vends newspapers, an evening paper is an evening paper. And once he has unfolded an afternoon sheet and read the streamer across the front page: "7 GIRLS SLIGHTLY SINGED IN EAST SIDE TENEMENT BLAZE" he feels that he has had his afternoon's reading. What good could another newspaper do him — until there has been another day and another tenement fire?

But your real Column fan must have his Column first, last and all the time. I was traveling out of Columbia, Mo., on the day of the American drive in the St. Mihiel sector. I was on a passenger and cattle train, and for hours I was looking for a village big enough to have a newsstand. At last I got to Centralia. I hastened to the newsdealer, a little hunchback about thirty years old. He told me that he had had 300 St. Louis papers that afternoon, but they were all gone. He never saw such a rush of business.

"Well, what did the headlines say?" I asked. "Did the Yanks win or fall down in their drive?"

"Gosh, I never pay any attention to the headlines," the newsdealer said. "All I ever read is Mutt and Jeff."

CHAPTER XI

## CONTRIBS

WHY will a man contribute his best stuff to a Column?

Because a man is as fond of seeing his name in print as a woman is of seeing her face in a mirror. Both of them will stand and gaze at it for hours at a time. When a rustic breaks into the country "society" items by building a barn or chopping his foot with an axe he will buy an extra edition of the paper to mail to all his friends.

I once interviewed a country fellow who was in jail waiting to be hanged for carving his sweetheart with a hay knife. His friends comforted him by saying: "Well, Gus, you're going to get your name in the paper." And he went to the gallows thinking of how the story would look in print instead of how the rope would feel on his neck.

Every man that a reporter talks to says: "Now remember, I don't want my name in the paper," and sometimes the reporter forgets to put it in — and then he has made an enemy for life.

And if he does put it in, he is liable to spell it

wrong. Then the man shrinking from publicity complains thus:

> "See here; I told you I didn't want my name connected with this disgraceful affair, and here you've gone and spelled it wrong. Jean Duke — my name isn't Jean Duke, it's John Duck. The way you've got it spelled half the folks won't know who you're talking about."

The only person I ever knew who really shrank from publicity was Barnum's Fattest Girl In The World. The "publicity" had her rated as "800 pounds of loveliness," but on inspection she shrank to 400 pounds of human blubber.

On Half Moon Mountain where I came from, few of the natives could read and write. Yet the country paper had a good circulation. The editor used to fake up little anecdotes about Lum Honeycutt and Bill Ballast and print them on an ancient press that he inked with shoe blacking. The postmaster read the paper to the natives and pointed out their names. They would mark their names with red poke berry juice and tack the sheet upon their cabin walls and learn the stories by heart. They imagined that they were reading, but they were merely remembering what the postmaster read. One of the old subscribers asked the editor one day: "Say, Mr. Printer, they's one point I don't rightly understand when I'm a-readin' of your paper. Does a feller read the white or the black?" No creature is so low in the scale that he doesn't want to get his name in the paper. I

can imagine how the insects felt in the days when there were so many editorials about Swat the Fly. It set all kinds of gossip buzzing in insect circles. All the old grand-daddy longlegs put on their specs and began running through the news. Of course a fly is illiterate, all he can do is make his mark. All they read is the punctuation. When a fly comes to a period, he thinks he has got his name in the paper.

So much for the why of contribs and contribbing. This eagerness to see their stuff in type is turned to his advantage by the Columnist who sets tasks for his contributors to perform. The Columnist (in this instance, Bert Leston Taylor) reads the dictionary definition of a sonnet. He is amused to find it described as a poem of fourteen lines with the rhymes in the following sequence "pig bat cat wig jig hat cat fig, lie red die bed pie wed." So the Columnist invites his Contribs to write sonnets using those words for rhymes. Immediately the sonnets begin coming in. They treat on all subjects imaginable although the ends of the lines are limited to that fixed set of words. Here is one written by a Contrib who signs himself "Anon":

TO A POLAND CHINA

O placid, round, and always hungry pig,
With bristles dark as night or crow or bat,
But sleek, withal, as some old tabby cat
Which with wet, dainty paw smoothes down her wig:
When some crude butcher ends your young life's jig,
I see, in your crisp bacon, fitting hat
To top the morning egg. An alley cat

Would starve on what I leave, for that a fig,
Anon, when on a kitchen plate you lie
In form of ham, well cured and pleasing red,
What recompense — if you as all must die,
And leave behind your sty and muddy bed —
To know you add the savor to the pie
When beefsteak, ham, and crust and skill are wed.

— Anon

Billy Sunday, the reformed ball player happened to be holding a revival in Chicago at the time, and this is taken as a text by a contrib signing himself Tom Tampion:

SUNDAY IN HELL

Satan himself squeals like a stuck pig;
Hell's bleachers roar. And SUNDAY COMES TO BAT,
Loping through Hades like an asbestos cat;
His wig-wag muscled ears they wag and wig;
His eyes dilate; his spike shoes dance a jig.
Stooping, he dusts his hands — pulls down his hat,
And glares at the pitcher like a cornered rat.
Satan is bluffed. Beneath his vine and fig —
On his own grounds, he's scared, boys, that's no lie.
Sunday at bat! And Satan seeing red!
This is *some* ball game. See this game and die!
Hell trembles to its deepest lava bed.
There comes the ball. Bill lamps it. Easy pie.
Bingo! The ball and Billy's bludgeon wed!

— Tom Tampion

There is an old barroom ballad with the refrain: "My Gawd, How The Money Rolls In!" During the early days of America's participation in the war, a contributor signing the name Sib started a series in B. L. T.'s column by saying that this is the way the Tommies chant it in Flanders:

Me mother's an apple pie baker,
Me father he fiddles for gin,
Me sister she sings for a shilling;
My Gawd, how the money rolls in!

Following this a corporal in a training camp who had left a ninety dollar a week job in civil life for the pittance of a non-com sent in a verse on the money rolling subject. Others kept up the refrain:

That corp'ral may dream as he sleeps in the rain,
But I was a cook in the days of the Maine.
Thirteen-fifty a month; how could I complain?
My Gawd, how the money rolled in!

— N. L. G.

Three dollars a week as professor of Greek,
Plus unlimited salary (notion unique)
For Linear service — c'est tres comique:
Ye gods, how the money rolls in!

— Prof. Jekyll of Hyde Park

Some guests out for golf on a fair summer's day,
With luncheon, "refreshments," and caddies to pay;
But — winning four bits by superior play —
Hoot mon! how the money rolls in!

— C. T. A.

Nine dollars from Bernstorf; I voted right:
Six a date from Chautauqua; my subject, "Why Fight?"
A commission on ev'ry fake pension I kite:
My Gawd, how the money rolls in!

We've all the big training-camps coming our way:
Just 'mong *us* will the boys in the South spend their pay
For making things safe for us Democrats, Say! —

My Gawd, where do you suppose those Northerners get all the money that Claude Kitchin and the rest of us take away from them in the course of a good, fat session?

— F. D.

ON THE OTHER HAND —

The missus is knitting her tenth pair of socks;
Brother Jim's buying rookies cigars by the box;
Who's that at the door? Ah, a bond salesman knocks —
My Gawd, how the money rolls out!

— J. U. H.

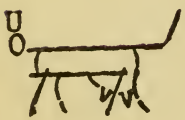
One of the most delightful series by Column Contribs was the Animal Typographs that ran in F. P. A.'s Column early in 1914. The animals were made by the Contribs on their typewriters.

GREAT THOUGHTS ABOUT LITTLE ANIMALS

OR

LITTLE THOUGHTS ABOUT GREAT ANIMALS

*By Gelett Burgess*



Cow

1.

THE COW

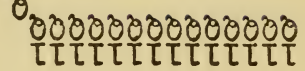
The Cow is quite bovine, at least
It is if books say true;
I know some more about the beast,
But why should I tell you?

2.

THE CATERPILLAR

*By Gelett Burgess*

The Caterpillar's feet are
small,
They aren't very strong;
'Tis strange, for caterpillars
all
Are over Eight Feet Long.



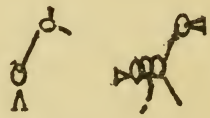
Caterpillar

3.

BLUE BIRD: JAY

*By Will Irwin*

The Bluebird is not Blue a bit,
The Jay is not a Jay;
Let Naturalists ponder It,
Before they say me Nay.



Blue Bird Jay

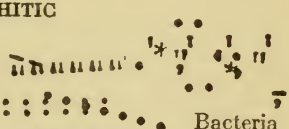
BROMIDIC THOUGHTS ON SULPHITIC ANIMALS

*By Gelett Burgess*

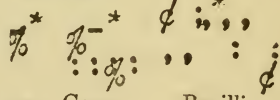
4.

COUSINS GERMAN

A Microbe is a kind of Germ,
A Germ is a Bacillus,
Bacilli are Bacteria —
Some will, some will not kill us.



Bacteria Microbes



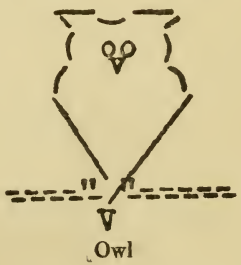
Germs Bacilli

STUPID THOUGHTS ABOUT WISE BIRDS

*By R. W. H. L.*

5.

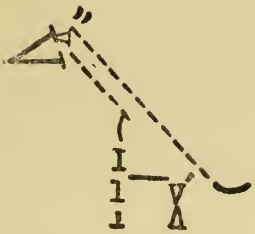
Wise bird, the Owl,
And wise am I;
I know this Fowl
Will get me by.



Owl

6.

I'll troll a stave about my friend,
The eminent Giraffe,
If Some One Else will condescend
To make his Typograph.
— Arthur Guiterman in
yesterday's Tower.



Giraffe

BY SOME ONE ELSE

Behold the eminent Giraffe;
To draw him is a pipe;
His collar is too high by half,
But he is True to Type.

STRAIGHT THOUGHTS ABOUT CROOKED ANIMALS

*By G. B. Hill*

7.

THE SNAKE

But best of all I like the Snake;
His picture's such a cinch to make.

Snake

HIGH THOUGHTS ABOUT FLIGHTY ANIMALS

OR

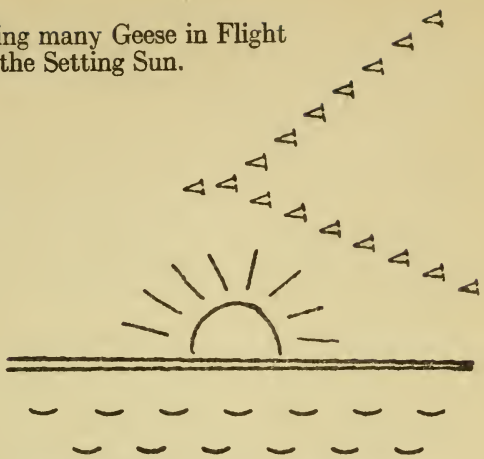
FLIGHTY THOUGHTS ABOUT HIGH ANIMALS

*By Burgess Johnson*

8.

THERE is no beautifüller sight,
Just when the day is done,

Than seeing many Geese in Flight
Above the Setting Sun.

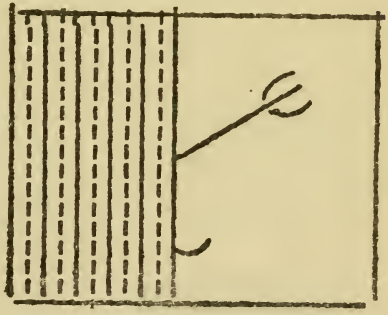


SIMPLE THOUGHTS ON PASTORAL THINGS

*By Phil Lang*

9.

The setting of the well
known sun has
found
Old Farmer Brown
with haying done,
and he
Now steps into the
barn. His faithful
hound
Trots silently be-
hind the cows to
see.



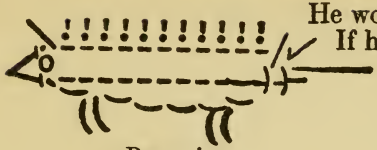
DULL THOUGHTS ABOUT SHARP ANIMALS

*By Frederick Dorr Steele*

10.

THE PORCUPINE

This is the Fretful Porcupine,
(I quote the Bard of Avon.)



Porcupine

He would be nicer, I opine,
If he were Neatly Shaven.

The Ape

HIGHBROW THOUGHTS ABOUT LOWBROW ANIMALS

*By Frederick Dorr Steele*

11.

THE APE

I do not care for mice and men,
I much prefer the Ape;
He has (to quote the Bard again)
A questionable shape.

SWIFT THOUGHTS ABOUT SLOW ANIMALS

*By J. A. W.*

The Turtle

12.

THE TURTLE

The Turtle is a Curious Beast,
As Queer as Queer can be;
Though I'm a trifle strange, at least,
I'm glad I am not he.

Raven at Midnight

DAY DREAMS ABOUT NIGHT BIRDS

*By Silas*

13.

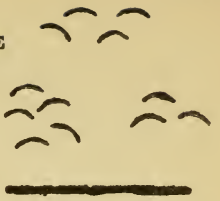
The Raven At Midnight is a spooky old bird,
'Caws, though folks can't see him, he sure can be heard.

HOW TO TELL THE BIRDS FROM THE HARBOR

*By Sindbad*

14.

Seagulls can be drawn with ease,
Make them of parentheses.



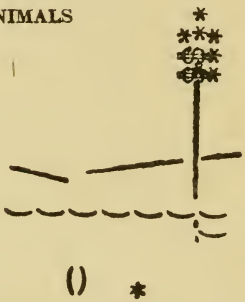
Seagulls

NOISY THOUGHTS ABOUT QUIET ANIMALS

*By Scott Robinson*

15.

The Star-Fish is an enemy
Of the Oyster as I bid you see;
The Oyster he may quite devour,
Before I get this in the Tower.



Star-fish Pursuing Oyster

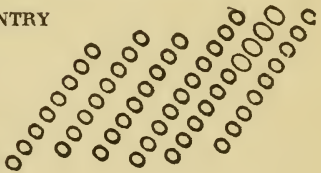
SUMMARY THOUGHTS OF WINTRY WEATHER

*By Bob*

16.

THE BEAUTIFUL SNOW

This timely typograph doth show,
The w.k. and beautiful snow.



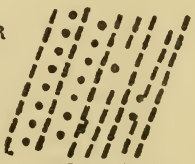
Beautiful Snow

DRY THOUGHTS ABOUT WET WEATHER

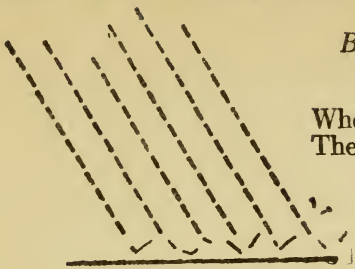
*By Chicot*

17.

If anything gives me a pain,
It's nasty, drizzling rain.



Nasty Rain

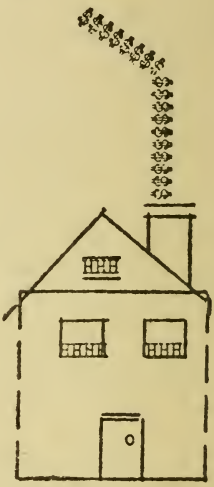


Easterly Wind

*By Arthur Guiterman*

18.

When the wind is easterly,
The weather is beasterly.



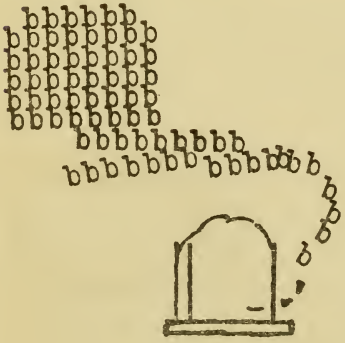
House

OVERT THOUGHTS ABOUT COVERT ANIMALS

*By R. W. H. L.*

19.

You cannot see the pretty,
The modest little mouse,
For he is in the Kitty,
And the Kitty's in the HOUSE.



Bee Swarm

GREAT THOUGHTS FROM LITTLE INSECTS GROW

*By Sindbad*

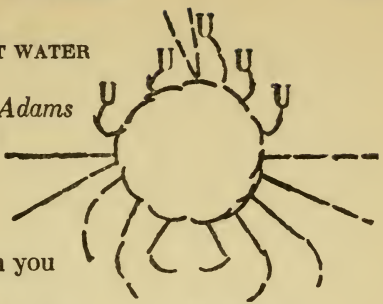
20.

It isn't often that one sees
A typographical swarm of bees.

### LAND THOUGHTS ABOUT WATER ANIMALS

*By Samuel Hopkins Adams*

21.



The Crab

#### THE CRAB

The crab is largely
legs and claws;
You catch him when you
go out fish-ing;
I hold him in esteem because
Of his retiring disposition.

### FOUR LINE THOUGHTS ABOUT FELINE ANIMALS

*By Lindsay Denison*

22.

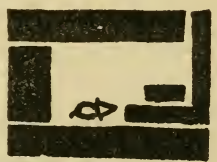
Grouchy Cat

Let Freddy Steele stick to
his art,
Or playing pool delight his
heart,
I'll bet a green and yellow
hat
He never typed a Grouchy
Cat.

### UPPERMOST THOUGHTS ABOUT UNDERGROUND SUBJECTS

*By Charles Phelps Cushing*

23.

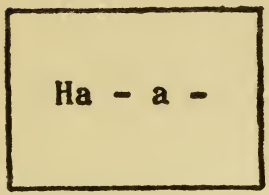


Mole Watching His Step. (Note he's all on the q-v)

Oh, airless and muggy and black is
the hole,
The miniature subway where
dwelleth the mole;
Consider his sorrows, ye strap-
hanging guys,
He watcheth his stepping with
obsolete eyes.

### DREARY THOUGHTS ABOUT COMIC ANIMALS

*By S. G. C.*



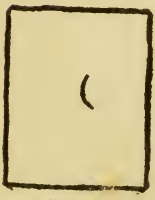

Front Part of Hyena's Laugh

24.

The Laughing Hyena I meant
to display
To you in a neat typograph;
The bothersome critter has
flitted away,
And he left only part of his
laugh.

### CELESTIAL THOUGHTS ABOUT HEAVENLY BODIES

*By R. C. McElravy*



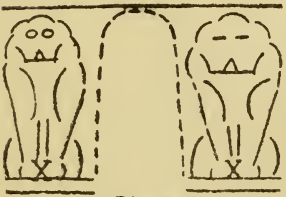

Moon

25.

I like to draw the Crescent Moon,
It's such a cinch to do it,
A slender curve; 'tis done so soon,
There's really nothing to it.

### LOWLIFE THOUGHTS ABOUT HIGHLIFE ANIMALS

*By Frederick Dorr Steele*



Lions

26.

The Lion is a Kingly Beast;
All kinds of work he hates;
But one thing he can do at
least,
He dotes on Guarding
Gates.

BOLD THOUGHTS ABOUT SLY BIRDS

*By Galloway*

27.

THE CASSOWARY

The Cassowary is a bird that's hard to capture, very;
Folks hunting for his plumes have made the Cassowary
wary.

Cassowary

CHAPTER XII

## HOW HUNCHES COME

THE third rate Columnist can steal his ideas. The first rater must get them out of the air. Newspaper humorists cannot wait for inspiration to come; they must throw up lightning rods and pull the divine spark down out of the clouds. Poets are born, not made. But humorists, carpenters and clam diggers are made. They are made by their own efforts; they work by blueprint and by plan.

The herring fleet each morning puts to sea; it has a method. Just what that method is, the landsman does not know. But every night the fleet comes home with herring. The duck hunter seeks his reedy blinds, but he goes not blindly; he has a duck system that brings down the ducks. The clam digger gets the clams.

The daily jokesmith has his system, too, and he pulls down the jokes from the skies or he digs them up out of the soil. Old Frank Adams, whose humor never fails him, says in his preface that "there are no secrets of the game. Given a set of morning papers, any child able to frame a coherent sentence and to rhyme in simple couplets, can begin to write a Column. In a day or two

the public will begin to help him; then he is an editor and a Conductor, and the public does most of his work for him." Anyone who can't see the humor in this can't see Adams. Frank came to New York some fifteen years ago with a definite plan, he intended to get the writing public to help him put across a Column that would mark an epoch in Comic Journalism. And today the toast of the town is: "F. P. A.; there he stands!"

Adams planned to be the best parodist in America. I think he is. "Parody," he said, "is a subtle form of literary criticism." Adams's Column is literary criticism in its drollest and most subtle form. It could thrive only in a great literary center. Hence, with calculated foresight Adams pulled up his stakes in the West and alone and without friends he came to the literary metropolis of America. His poems are not burlesques nor satires; they are true parodies. Some times he parodies the style of writers using his own thoughts in place of theirs. Often he uses both their thought and their style.

Note the parody of style in this — with the parodist's own thought and criticism:

OH, I WENT DOWN TO THE RIVER BANK!

Oh, I went down to the river bank
Last night,
When a million stars were bright
And you in the long grass lay.

Oh, the wind blew over the river bank
Last night,

And the touch of your lips was light
As we in the warm grass lay.

Oh, I came up from the river bank
Alone,
While the weary wind made moan,
And the dawn on the crushed grass lay.

RUTH THOMAS PICKERING, Vassar, '14, in *Vassar Miscellany* for February, 1914.

TO RUTH

Oh, I read all of your poem, Ruth,
Last night,
And I said "To the colyum's height
With that there little lay.

Oh, I gave some thought to your poem, Ruth,
Last night,
And I felt that I ought to write
The lady who wrote that lay.

Oh, I am keen for your lyric, Ruth,
It smokes!
But — how did it hit your folks
When they read their daughter's lay?

— F. P. A.

That shows Adams's plan, and it also reveals how his hunches come. He has unerring judgment, the one quality that all Columnists must have. Given that, "any child who can frame a coherent sentence and can rhyme in simple couplets" will make his mark in the Column trade.

Christopher Morley reads books and hobnobs with their authors. He simply writes in verse and prose his sentimental reactions to life and books. It is a simple plan. But Heaven endowed

him with good judgment, and pen and ink did the rest.

Don Marquis is a satirist and a burlesquer. He is more than a satirist, he is a satyr. He is the most unexpected and most devilish pranker who was ever harnessed to a Column. That poor nymph, Hermione, he has tormented into martyrdom. Almost equally has he tantalized the man who has to make up the editorial page with a full Column of the Sun Dial every day. That make-up editor never knows whether Don will come across or not.

"In fact," Don told a crony, "I'm not so irresponsible as I make them believe."

With this example of Don's burlesque, this little volume comes to its close:

## PANSY, THE GIRL REVENOOR

OR

## RUM HOUND VERSUS RIGHTEOUSNESS

### CHAPTER TWENTY

Pansy's feet had been caught by the periscope of a submarine.

The next instant the hatchway was opened and she was drawn inside.

It was pitch dark there.

But she knew she was not alone.

She could hear breathing all about her.

Whispers and fiendish chuckles came to her ears through the darkness.

### CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Suddenly a cork popped in the darkness.

She smelled some alcoholic beverage.

There was a gurgling noise. The fiends were drinking.

She felt the sides of the boat grating against concrete or stone.

In another instant it came to rest in a narrow passageway.

Her captors dragged her from the boat, led her up a flight of stairs and flung her into a chamber carved out of the rock.

She fell upon a heap of bottles.

Pansy had an acute sense of direction and never for an instant had been at a loss as to where she was going.

She was in the wine cellar of one of the houses in Brooklyn Heights.

### CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

She reached for a hairpin.

It was but the work of a moment to unlock her handcuffs with this weapon.

She began to tap on the walls.

Soon she heard a strange rumbling sound. It shook the earth.

It drew nearer. It rushed by on the other side of the wall.

It was a subway train. It was soon gone.

### CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

She struck frantically at the rock.

Fortune favored her.

When that part of the subway had been dug the tools had slipped somehow and gouged a hole almost through the wall of the wine cellar.

Pansy broke through the wall with the handcuffs and leaped upon the subway track.

A shout behind her told that she was pursued.

Crack! Crack! went the rifles and pistols of her pursuers.

Bullets whistled by her.

A light flashed in front of her. There was a roar.

A subway train was rushing at her.

### CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

She leapt to the other track.

So did her pursuers. They had bloodhounds. She could hear the dogs.

Roar! Another train was coming!

She sprang back to the first track.

Crash! came another train. Express trains and locals were now rushing around her on four tracks, the bullets sang about her head and the bloodhounds were coming nearer every instant.

She was a brave girl and determined to sell her life dearly.

She grasped a steel pillar and began to climb. She was quite athletic.

### CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

But at that instant the roof of the subway caved in.

Floods of water began to pour down upon her.

She was under the East River.

She dashed the water from her eyes and tried to swim upward against the torrent.

### CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

There was the crash of a frightful explosion.

One of the Rum Hounds had flung a bomb at her.

It saved Pansy's life. It blew her right through the bed of the East River and out on the surface of the water.

She drew a long breath.

"Saved!" she cried.

But the respite was brief.

A hydroplane swooped down upon her and opened fire from a machine gun.

She saw the evil face of Maltravers Gashford as he worked the weapon.

She dived.

As she came up her head struck against the keel of an ocean going tug driving along at full speed.

But it was only a flesh wound.

She clambered aboard the tug and sprang into the engine room.

Alas! The vessel was in the hands of the Rum Hounds!

A giant stoker, recognizing her, aimed a frightful blow at her skull with a heavy crowbar.

Down swung the deadly weapon!

All seemed lost.

(To be continued.)

DON MARQUIS.

## CHAPTER XIII

## THE MYSTERY EXPLAINED

The "whys and hows of the process" of writing his column was recently explained by Don Marquis as follows:

"Few column conductors tell the truth about it. Most of them pose, and say that it is easy. We do not find it easy.

"We write the Sun Dial for the entire week, six columns, between 2 and 3 o'clock every Monday afternoon. The concentration necessary is such a frightful strain on us that the moment the six columns are finished we fall fainting on the rich Oriental rug in the center of our studio. We lie and moan on the rug, in our sleep, until we are carried to bed, and we remain in bed, in a state of utter exhaustion, until Wednesday. About Wednesday noon we usually open our eyes, and the nurse gives us a little chicken broth, and maybe a saltine cracker. On Thursdays we are usually able to sit up in bed and have poached egg on toast.

"On Fridays we sit by the window and look out on the city and harbor. Perhaps some noted violinist comes and plays a little music for us . . . nothing too emotional, of course. Often, on

Friday afternoons, some dramatic company is brought to our rooms, and performs for us an act or two of a good play. By Friday evening we are usually so far recovered that we are allowed to see a friend or two.

"On Saturday we try to get out into the air a little. If we are still too weak, we are carried to the roof, and lie in a steamer chair. On Saturday candidates for the presidency are allowed to send in their cards, and even talk with us, for a moment or two, and sometimes we send down a kindly word to the foreign ambassadors and publicity agents who are waiting hopefully for our notice.

"On Sunday, we do little. We are gathering strength for the wild debauch of work that is to come on Monday afternoon. Sometimes, if the light is right, we do a little landscape painting, to amuse ourself, on Sunday; and often we toy with a poem, or model a portrait bust or two in clay, by way of recreation; or write a play, or sing, and accompany ourself on the harp, improvising; or jot down ideas for sermons, which we send to our friends in the ministry.

"Monday morning we arise, feeling vigorous and irritable, and make life as unpleasant as possible for everyone connected with us. We feel the Hour approaching. While we are confident of our powers, at the same time the *Hour of Work* will be an hour of agony to us, and we know it. When 2 o'clock arrives, we are trembling and thundering, like a cloud that is surcharged with

electricity . . . and then, with a wild cry, we plunge into the horrid abyss of toil. Screaming and lashing out with arms and legs, we rush upon the dozen typewriters that stand awaiting us, and soon all twelve of them are pulsing and roaring with a rhythmic tumult as when the hurricane hurls the ocean against some rockbound coast. Sometimes our secretaries, who pick the stuff up and edit it for us, discover that, besides the six columns, we have also produced a novel or half a dozen short stories; we never know.

"At three o'clock sharp we fall fainting again upon the rich Oriental rug in the center of our studio . . .

"Some persons might find it an easy existence. For our part, we regard it as a frightful grind."

On hearing this explanation of Don's method, the foreman of the composing room snorted in disgust.

"That stuff of yours about writing six columns between 2 and 3 o'clock every Monday afternoon," he said, "might get across with some persons. But not with me! I'll say you are a liar! What you do is get up half a column every day between 4 and 5, when it's nearly too late to get it into type at all, and bring it in here and ask us for God's sake to stretch it into a column somehow!"

Don's advice to the aspiring columnist: "Write about yourself; if your *self* is acceptable, your writings will be" — is a theory that Ed. Howe expresses thus: "Any man who will look

into his heart and honestly write what he sees there, will find plenty of readers." Neither Howe nor Don Marquis claims originality for this thesis. Howe says that doubtless some rhetorician expressed the same thought ten thousand years ago. The manner in which Don Marquis applies it is fully illustrated in this sample of the Sun Dial that appeared February 25, 1920:

We are more bored with the Sun Dial column today than we can find words to express. Often we like it. Now and then we are just simply crazy about it. Usually we find something in it that we can stand, even when we are not enthusiastic. But today the idea of a column wearies us to the point of tears.

> The shoes of all the *world* go Sqush!
> Along the streets and drains;
> *Its* thoughts are trampling through the slush,
> Which is its *futile brains.*

We don't even intend to open our mail today. Some of the contributors may have sent in something really funny. If we happened onto anything funny we should scream! At the moment we loathe and hate humor. If anyone tells us a joke, we shall consider ourselves insulted.

> O little influenza germ,
> Come nestle in my chest,
> And finish this my earthly term.
> God knows, perhaps 'twere best.

We were at a dinner the other evening, and we were called upon to say a few words. It suddenly occurred to us after we had made certain dull and inept remarks that we really didn't have a damn thing to say, and so we sat down. The curse of writing a column every day is that you can't sit down when you haven't anything to say.

Sometimes I love the human race,
And find it kind and gay,
Sometimes I look upon its face
With thoughts I dare not say.

We have been trying to entertain you and amuse you, Gentle Reader, for many years. Sometimes we enjoyed it and sometimes we didn't. Today we are going to take a day off from trying to please you and see if we can communicate our own low spirits and wretched temper to you. There is no reason why you should feel jolly and cheerful and carefree while we have such a grouch.

The cold rain dribbles from the sky,
Into the slushy street,
And I'll be in it by and by,
And wet my tender feet.

There are too many of these columns scattered about the country. Almost every paper you pick up has one in it, and some of them have two. Amy Lowell was exactly right when she said that they were sad affairs, pitiful things. It made us sore at the time, but we see now that she was well inspired.

The salt tears splatter down my cheek,
And fall kersplash! And blob!
And should I ope my lips to speak,
All I can do is sob.

Although grouchy as we are at all columns, and at this one in particular, we don't know that we are any more grouchy at columns than we are at everything else in the world.

I am too sad to comb my hair,
Or shave my face withal,
Or even brush my collar where
Life's pallid dandruffs fall.

Perhaps one of the meanest traits in human nature is the willingness most of us have, when we have a grouch, to pass it along to the next fellow.

If I were a god, I would get me a spear, I would get me a horse and dog,
And merrily, merrily I would ride, through covert and brake and bog —
With hoofbeat and horn and laughter loud over the hills and away,
For there is no sport like that of a god who sees a man at bay.

Ho! but the morning is windy and cold, and the sunlit showers are bright;
And yonder the quarry breaks from the brush, and heads for the hills in flight!
A minute's law for the harried thing, then follow him, follow him fast;
With a bellow of horns and a beat of hoofs, and the mellow bugle blast.
Hillo! halloo! we have marked the man — there is sport in the world today!
And a clamor swells from the heart of the wood that tells of a soul at bay.

Well, we are feeling sort of cheered up now, for our part.

—

There is nothing after all like getting a thing off your chest.

—

Hoping you are feeling better yourself —

—

We are —

—

Yours for bitters or for wurst.

DON MARQUIS

Mr. Marquis speaks of the life-long quarrel between his body and his soul. Few realize that he is serious in this. The truth is that Don Marquis is not a cynic but a psychic. He sees mirages and hears the symphonies of unseen stars. Muddy-minded persons too cross to catch his meaning, lazily laugh off his lyrics as a joke. Don accepts his status with such zanies. To them he is a clown, a most material Pantaloon. In fact he is a mystic. And because he is a mystic, he does not even make it clear that such he is.

The mystic poet is an enigma. But oh, how easily one reads him when one finds the "key." When a young German editor and poet in New York wrote to his mother in Berlin these touching lines:

> On June the ninth, our dearest Cousin Lou,
> Perished in Harlem of the raging flu;

> His solemn coffin, with remains therein,
> I ship, embalmed, by next boat to Berlin —

the American censor, having the key to his code, caused the poet to be arrested and interned at Atlanta, Georgia. For, in the German code "dearest cousins" means the English; "Harlem" means Albemarle; and "Berlin" means Hades. Further recital would be tiresome, so let us proceed to the finished rendering of the blithe rhyme, thus:

> June ninth, the English liner Albemarle
> Sailed, with munitions, for Liverpool.
> I have planted aboard enough picric bombs
> To blow her to hell.

The difference in the reading is considerable, and it is al due to seeing the thing as the poet saw it. I promise to apply the same rule to the poems of Don Marquis. I will furnish the key to his lyrics, which is the key to all lyric poetry. In doing this it will be necessary, for the sake of contrast, to cite examples of the imagists, say, Carl Sandburg or Gertrude Stein, and give the key to their illusive cryptograms.

But is it possible that poets write in code? Certainly they do. That's what makes them poets. Poets are born, not made. The defect must be congenital. Sam Kiser says that a "bat on the bean" in a boys' baseball game started him to writing verse. Milton was a political secretary until an accident knocked his eyes out, and then he developed symptoms of poetry. The mani-

festation is common to cripples. A man loses a leg under a beer wagon and stumps out of the hospital with the following lines on a card:

> Once I had two good legs like you,
> And daily my labor I did do;
> But a munitions explosion put me in this terrible fix;
> God pity a poor cripple. GIVE WHAT YOU WISH.

But these accidents do not make real poets. We reiterate that the real poet must be born with his defect. The problem of the critic is to learn what that defect is. Knowing that, the rest is easy. The poems are decoded as easily as the German's touching threnody of "Cousin Lou" who died in Harlem of the flu.

But how to go about discovering the defect? Near-sighted pupils in the public schools have been passed off for imbeciles, when all they needed was a pair of glasses. When a child looks at a dog and says: "Oh, see that beautiful horse," we used to take him to the bug house, but now we take him to the oculist. The same sympathetic understanding is now being applied to poets. Instead of damning the whole tribe as incurable shatterpates, we should take them to an eye and ear specialist. He can soon tell us what causes the "singing in the head." The chief defects with congenital poets like Don Marquis are in their eye and ear connections. Their wires are crossed, so that some of them hear with their eyes and others see with their ears. Some of them see a

thing's color and *hear* its *shape;* others see its shape but *hear* its *color.*

All of this sounds absurd. And yet we are familiar with the deaf man who hears with his eyes (lip reading), and the blind man who sees with his ears (cane tapping). We know of the left-handed school child who writes backwards and the child with defective lenses who sees the world upside down. And just such psychiatric faults as these afflict the poets, and that's what makes their output poetry. They see the world topsy turvy.

> "It isn't raining rain to me,
> It's raining violets."

That couplet gives the clue. I could prove my thesis if necessary. But the poets openly confess to it.

"Statistics, for me, fall naturally into various colors," writes Don Marquis in "Prefaces." "For instance, 7,377,777, whether for imports or exports, is undoubtedly red. But 1,009,901 is pale grayish blue." The poet then goes on to name the other digits and tell what color each proclaims. He says that the figure 5 is a peevish, querulous yellow. He does not like this color and he "will exclude it from a volume of statistics" he is compiling. His mental wires are crossed so that when you show him a figure he sees a color. A cerebral surgeon could correct this defect by an operation. That would kill Don's genius. The world would

lose a poet and gain a bookkeeper. Let us retain our lyrists, but let us understand them. Returning to the couplet,

> It isn't raining rain to me,
> It's raining violets —

we now interpret it with ease. Don has told us that the figure zero is purple. Hence when the air is full of these little round raindrops, shaped like zeros, it isn't raining rain to the poet, it is raining violet rays.

The imagist poets despise such lyrics. They see only shapes, not colors. Carl Sandburg makes his confession in his volume "Corn Huskers":

> 'Both 1 and 7 are straightforward, military, filled with lunge and attack, erect in shoulder straps.
> The 6 and 9 salute as dancing sisters, . . .
> And 2 is a trapeze actor swinging to handclaps . . .
> And 3 has a hump on its back; 8 is knock-kneed.

Where the lyrist sees only vibrant, rhythmic colors "without form, and void," the imagist sees only human figures, — hunchbacks, knock-knees, dancing girls and stiff-backed soldiers. Their appetite for human shapes is satisfied with such colorless, unrhythmic "poems" as this:

> Curtain rise
> At the Hunchback's theatre:
> A soldier and
> A dancing girl,
> A soldier
> And a dancing girl.

This poem reduced to statistics is merely, "Jan. 8, 1916."

There is no possibility of reconciling these two camps of poets. That is not the aim of this essay. I merely expose them for what they are, grand little cases for the optician's clinic.

The poets have always protested that to analyze art is to destroy it. We have certainly analyzed away all the claims to "art" by these two schools of houri-eyed ghost-seers.

Another interesting — one had almost said amazing, — revelation remains to be exploited. Why are lyric poets conservatives — in the English political sense — while the imagists are howling radicals; why does the one support Great Britain while the other boosts for Germany? Greenwich Village, home of imagist poets, is pro-German and pro-Irish and pro-everything that hates Great Britain. I happened to dine at "Polly's" in the village on Armistice night and expressed the opinion that the Germans were well beaten. My tête-à-tête hushed me up with the warning that my sentiments were liable to be overheard.

The cause of this pro-Germanness has been attributed to the *vers librist's* natural born genius for picking a loser and sticking to it. On the other hand, the pro-Allies' sentiment of Don Marquis and other lyric poets is explained in the Village by the theory that they are hired propagandists "bought by English gold."

These piffling theories are brushed away by the besom of scientific facts. The mystery is no longer mysterious; the key has already been

furnished the reader. The lyric poet sees the colorful things with his peculiar eyes; the imagist sees the lumps.

When Don Marquis reads the familiar lines —

> I met a little cottage girl,
> She was eight years old she said.

he comes to the figure 8, which represents brown to him, and he is immediately imbued with a sense of hazel-colored tresses, "thick with many a curl that clustered round her head." He finds the poem pleasing and is willing to give three cheers for English men of letters. But let Carl Sandburg, with his unhappy visual images, read the same stanza:

> I met a little cottage girl,
> She was knock-kneed . . .

He stops right there; he has seen enough. His spirit is revolted. Here are knock-knees in a child — *rickets*, a disease of malnutrition, calmly condoned and passed over by an English poet. The blood of Sandburg boils with indignation. "A cottage girl" indeed. What is that but the daughter of a cottager? And what is the difference between a cottager and a farmer? A cottager is a farm laborer excluded from ownership of the land and forced to live in a rented cottage! Lacking farmland, he lacks milk for his little ones. Hence rickets and knock-knees, and the little cottage girl goes out into the world with her deformity to

be patronized and twitted by a milk-fed English poet. Now you know why they hate England.

Let us recall the old school-book ballad of the famine in Ireland:

> Give me three grains of corn, mother,
> Only three grains of corn,
> To keep what little life I have,
> Till the coming of the morn.

Don Marquis reads it, and coming upon the figure 3, which is "green" to him, he interprets it as an appeal for green corn or succotash. This is a nourishing dish, one well fitted to the needs of growing childhood. But when Carl Sandburg reads the stanza, with his unfortunate concept standing in place of the 3, this is what he gets:

> Give me a bump on the back, mother,
> Give me a bump on the back,
> This may divert my hunger pangs
> For what my innards lack.

The heartlessness of this, the thought of pounding a child into paralysis to stifle its food cravings must naturally enkindle the sympathy of the imagist and inflame his wrath against a country that permits it. And that's why Fothergil Finch and all his tribe hate Britain and weep incessantly for poor back-broken Ireland. This misconception, astonishing as it is, cannot be remedied by argument.

Nothing that you can pour into the ear will cure a defect of the eye. There are no snakes in

Ireland. If a man with delerium tremens sees reptiles there, the remedy is not to beat the bushes but to turn to the man's outbulging eyes and knock them off with a stick. It is but a simple twist of the wrist, but it de-reptiles Ireland in short order.

Having shown why the *vers librists* hate England, we may proceed to uncover the reasons why they love Germany. Germany is the land of Carl Marx and Gertrude Stein, two writers, who, having the same defects of vision as the free poets, contrive to write in a manner that pleases the *vers libre* tribe. Examine this extract from Karl Marx's "Correspondence With Engel":

> At the present rate of capitalist accretion we should calculate that the utter extinction of the middle class will take place early in the Twentieth Century, the final bourgeois shopkeeper blowing up on the evening of January 3, 1916.

and this from Gertrude Stein ("Tender Buttons," pp. 54, 57, 63):

> Stick, stick call then, stick stick sticking with a chicken. Sticking in an extra succession, sticking in. A show at tick and loosen, loosen so to speak. It was an extra leaker, it was an extra licker with a spoon. They do not eat who mention silver and sweet. An occupation. A voice remains and offering. There was no rental.

The reader is disgusted with both of these passages, saying to himself there is no sense in either of them. Ah, gentle reader (I assume

that you *are gentle*, for if this rigmarole hasn't "gentled you down" as the crooning cowboys say, nothing ever will) — but, to resume — ah, gentle reader, you are mistaken. The passage from Karl Marx is rich in sense and imagery to the "seeing eye," that is, the figure-frantic eyes of all free poets. Examine these statistics:

"Evening of January 3, 1916." January evening is "winter night," 3 is a hunchback — but you've heard the poem before:

> A winter night
> At the Hunchback's theatre.
> A soldier
> And a dancing girl;
> A soldier
> And a dancing girl.

This poem was declared by Guido Bruno in his Garret to be one of the most exquisite of all of Marx's poems. Kreymborg says it was the first perfect "mushroom," and that he learned to write his own mushrooms from this model. Amy Lowell approves it as having perfect rhythm with "rise and return" in each line, which indeed it has. "Winter night" has a rise and return of the mercury, the "Hunchback" has a rise and return of his dorsal skyline, the "theatre" a rise and return of the curtain. And the dancing girls, having got a rise out of the soldiers, may expect a return engagement. No wonder the socialists admire Karl Marx as a writer. He writes "their kind of stuff." No wonder they endorse the blow-

up of the bourgeois shopkeeper, since it affords so beautiful a poem.

But Don Marquis has asked them: "When the last shopkeeper shrivels, where will you buy your cheese and cigarettes?" That's why Don Marquis can never be a Marxian; he reads him literally, and when he comes to statistics, he sees only flashes of color, mostly "red." So he excluded Marx's figures from a volume of statistics he is compiling.

It is useless to defend the bourgeois class by pointing out that they are the necessary purveyors of bread and cheese. What is bread and cheese to souls that hunger for beauty? And what a *darling* date, January 3, 1916, is in its terms of dancing girls and red-coat soldiers! This is pure beauty. And a German author gave us those statistics; ain't Germany wonderful?

A poor bourgeois blockhead, trying to refute this Marxian socialism, pointed out to the *vers librists* that the date had passed. The hour fixed for the exit of the bourgeoisie, like Mother Shipton's date for the world's end to

> . . . . . come,
> In Eighteen Hundred and Eighty-one.

had come and passed without incident, and both the world and the shopkeeper are still with us, too much with us, as the poets say. He went on to show by the census figures that on the date set, the bourgeoisie instead of consisting of a single

perishing specimen, actually numbered in England and America, 86,775,008. The free verse socialist who was shown these figures read them in his peculiar way and was so inflamed by the horrible exhibition that he was persuaded to change from a socialist to an *anarchist!* To him the figure 5 represented a smoking bomb, the symbol of a direct actionist, while the two naughts of course were cocoanuts. The whole series of digits he interpreted thus:

> A knock-kneed girl dancing (86) is seen, while in a neighboring square two soldiers, strong and erect (77), lunge to attack an anarchist (5) beating him over the coco (0) once and again (0) until his sagging knees knock together (8).

How terrible! A knock-kneed Diana (typical bourgeois ugliness) carelessly dancing on the very crater of the social upheaval, while only separated from her by a coma (the sleeping sickness of the blind middle classes), their brutal soldiery was beating a poor devil of an idealist to death. That's the sort of thing that turns the sympathetic free verse socialists into anarchists themselves. And now we understand why bourgeois statistics always drive them frantic, while the figures of Karl Marx are always soothing and sustaining. It's all in the eye. This is known as the "optometric interpretation of history."

The theory and the facts have now been laid before you. I have made my boast that I could explain what the imagists saw in Karl Marx.

You will grant that I have done so. He is the master poet of all imagist poets, he is not a materialist nor an economist at all. When you have his code, you can read him with the same enjoyment that the secret service had in reading the

> Cousin Looie
> Has gone flooie,
> I will ship his body to 'e. —

sort of poems of the early days of the war. But I have also said that I would show the meaning in the writings of that other great mystic, so beloved of the Greenwich socialists — Gertrude Stein. I will clinch my argument with this final demonstration:

"Stick, stick call then, stick stick sticking with a chicken," wrote the inimitable Gertrude. This is imagism. With the verbs supplied, it runs thus: "Your STICK, pick up your malacca STICK and CALL THEN on an up-town society girl who is fascinated by socialist hoboes from the Village. STICK around, STICK around with this CHICKEN."

"Sticking in an extra succession, sticking in" means that the hobo STICKS while other social buds drop into the soiree, STICKING his gab IN to every topic discussed.

"A show at tick" means he is seeing this SHOW on TICK, that is, without its costing him anything. "Loosen, loosen so to speak" means that he gets so much tea and cakes that he has to LOOSEN his vest so that he can get breath to keep on SPEAKING.

"It was an extra leaker, it was an extra licker with a spoon." This means that the hostess has in her cellar a demijohn of dry gin that has sprung a leak (AN EXTRA LEAKER) and so she has to use up this EXTRA good LICKER on a very common guest. "They do not eat who mention silver and sweet." That is, — the butler and the second man who have sugar and lemons in silver receptacles do not partake of the contents. Their OCCUPATION is to serve. "A voice remains and offering." The socialist guest is now blind drunk, his hostess is merely a VOICE, but he hears her OFFERING more booze, and he accepts. "There is no rental," i.e., it ain't costin' him nothin'.

Can you longer wonder why the imagism of Gertrude Stein (and even her name) sounds good to the thirsty poets of Washington Square?

And so we have seen the gulf between the two schools of poetry. Each hates the other. Each has its own peculiar way of looking at the world. A mote is in the eye of one and a beam in the eye of the other. Don Marquis has a beam, and it fills a world with color that were otherwise too drab.

# APPENDIX

Others wrote so many prefaces to this book that I didn't get a chance to write one myself. So I have decided to have an appendix all to myself. (Sometimes I say "I" and sometimes I use the editorial "we"; the problem of making a choice between these two forms was too much for my indecisive intellect.) If the reader is as tired of reading this book as I am of writing it, we are both groggy.

Note 1. The Columnist has been taken up in a serious way by the writers of real literature. In the Saturday Evening Post he appears as a lay figure in a story by F. Scott Fitzgerald called "Head and Shoulders." An actress who was famous for her shoulder work eventually developed head work. The Columnist helped her to bring out a book. Telling of her progress, the variety actress — then a cabaret singer — says:

— "We went to New York . . . in two days we'd landed a job in Divinerries' and I learned to shimmy from a kid at the Palais Royal. We stayed six months . . . until one night Peter Boyce Wendell the Columnist, ate his milk toast there. Next morning a poem about Marvelous Marcia came out in his paper and within three days I had two

> vaudeville offers and a chance at the Midnight Frolic. I wrote Wendell a thank-you letter, and he printed it in his Column — said that my style was like Carlyle's, only more rugged, and that I ought to quit dancing and do North American literature."

Later the shimmy dancer marries, and during her domestic retirement she studies the Diary of Samuel Pepys, and then writes the story of her own life in the gossipy manner of Pepys. This manuscript she sends to the Columnist; he calls the attention of publishers to her book, and boosting it in his Column, he brings her fame.

Now, what New York Columnist did the author have in mind? Franklin Pierce Adams is the only one whose name contains three words. Suppose Mr. Fitzgerald, the author of the story, were seeking a parallel name for Adams; how quickly Wendell Phillips would occur to him. He throws away the "Phillips" and accepts Wendell as the last name. Frank's middle name "Pierce" is easily parodied with "Boyce." The P from Pierce is carried over to the first name, "Peter." Thus Franklin Pierce Adams becomes Peter Boyce Wendell. But no such Sherlocking is necessary — the Pepys Diary gives the whole thing away. And thus by his ears the dignified F. P. A. is dragged into this harlequinade.

Why should this author, merely because F. P. A. once wrote of Pavlowa —

> Pavlowa! Than Lillian more airy!
> Pavlowa! Terpsichore's self!

Thou sprite, hamadryad and fairy,
Thou pixie, thou sylph, and thou elf!
I think of thee strong as the panther
And light as the will-o'-the-wisp;
I think thou'rt believe me thome danther —
Please pardon my lisp.

Perhaps as I'm writing, Pavlowa,
Thoudst not care to give me a glance.
How narrow is Art! I'd not throw a
A good evening to look at thee dance.
To each his conception of blisses —
My notion is staying at home.
The tickets I slipped to the Mrs.
And penned thee this pome.

— why, we repeat, should Fitzgerald assume that F. P. A. would write a poem to a mere shimmy dancer, a cabaret performer without a reputation in *le beau monde?* Especially since he snubbed the well-touted Pavlowa? Furthermore Mr. Fitzgerald describes the Columnist as dining on milk sop. The slur is gratuitous. It seems to show a deliberate attempt to belittle the biting qualities of the Columnist's literary criticism. It is the equivalent of saying, "Oh, mush!" or, in the deadlier term that Mencken uses, "Pishposh." Mr. Fitzgerald is playing fast and loose with a real literary personage. He has come dangerously near to libeling F. P. A. Persons who do not know Frank Adams personally would gain the impression that he is a milk sop eater, a toothless anæmic rounder who writes apostrophes to gaudy birds that preen themselves in the midnight cabaret. The law of libel says that it is not neces-

sary to mention a name if the identity is otherwise made so complete as to be recognized by the public. Damages can be had if the libel give the victim "great mental pain and anguish." Certainly this characterization of the dean of New York Columnists is enough to give anybody a pain.

NOTE 2. Mr. Fitzgerald has put forth a book called "This Side of Paradise." It seems that this author, who affects a searching and cynical philosophy of life, is only twenty-three years old. His youthfulness explains the carelessness with which he handled F. P. A. How, then, shall we explain what Columnist Heywood Broun did to young Fitzgerald when he came to review his book?

NOTE 3. That fatness and funniness are identical in the American conception of humor is proven by the stage jargon that calls funny lines, to be spoken by the comedian, "fat" lines. Typical of these fat lines was the explanation of the sheriff in "Arizona": "Hell, nobody loves a fat man." This line achieved a universal popularity.

For many years John L. Sullivan exhibited his paunch in vaudeville and recited these pathetic lines:

'I met a fren' o' mine the other day, and he said: 'John, you ought to get rid o' that." (Sullivan tapped himself on the tummy.)

I said: "Well, Gus, if I could have one tenth the fun taking it off that I had putting it on, I'd begin getting rid of it tomorrow."

Of course if he had got rid of it, he would have got rid of his livelihood, for that was the line that "carried" his act.

When the movies demonstrated that it was practicable to show a two dollar fat man to the multitudes for five cents, John Bunny soon became "the best known face (sic) in America." John died and left comedy flat on its back, or rather collapsed in its belly, until Roscoe Arbuckle (the sheriff of "Arizona") was recruited to fill the gap. Fill the gap is subtle, so we pause for emphasis, then hurry on.

President Taft had a modestly self-deprecating way of making his stomach an international laughing matter by remarking from time to time that "no gentleman weighs more than 200 pounds." At the same time he was careful to furnish the press with figures showing that obesitically speaking, he was batting around 300 all the time.

However, Mr. Taft set about getting rid of his fat and within a year it was all gone. He hasn't cracked a joke since. The truth is he didn't regard his obesity as being funny. But since everybody else was laughing at it, he didn't choose to be a stubborn minority. When it is one man against the world, even though that man be in the White House, the contest is hopeless. That's why the judicial minded President amiably acquiesced in the opinion of the majority, and adding his voice to the gale of laughter that beat about his embonpoint, he made it unanimous.

Hence arises the fallacy that Don Marquis complains of so bitterly — that all fat men are humorists. It is true that all fat men are good natured. But the reason for this, Mr. Marquis has explained in a previous essay. In the presence of insult, a man must either take it good naturedly or offer to fight. If a man risks the offer of battle, he must be prepared to run (in case the offer is accepted). A fat man can't run. Therefore he stands flatfooted and grins at everything. The extent to which a fat man under torment by a lean one can assume the appearance of good nature is illustrated in the story of a corpulent Kentucky colonel some six feet tall and weighing 250 pounds who inadvertently offended a ninety-pound editor by bandying some pleasantry about his leanness. The editor flew into a rage and rushing up to the offender, whose ample waist was on a level with the editor's chin, he began sinking his fists to the wrist in a drum fire of blows on the Colonel's stomach.

The Colonel was distressed, but he decided to rely on the only weapon of defence with which nature provides the obese, his geniality.

"Jim, what are you doing down there?" he asked solicitously.

"I'm fightin', by gad, Sir; I'm fightin'."

But he immediately became discouraged by the lack of results and an armistice on that front began.

Irvin Cobb and Sam Blithe used to make a living by joshing their own fatness just as Dickens and

Victor Hugo lived by sympathizing with the poor.

Don Marquis complains that although he is a serious and melancholy poet, he is regarded as a humorist because he is fat. The author of this book, on the other hand, is lean. Therefore all his works are regarded as dull and tiresome reading. As a matter of fact, he is a sparkling humorist.

Christopher Morley has a little podded belly about the size of half a grape fruit. But it is enough to qualify him as a humorist. Here is the way he usually ends his column:

SWEET ARE THE USES OF OBESITY

At Miami one's attention is attracted to the flannel and linen suits in which the front line of the jacket ends in a decided curve.

— Item concerning men's styles.

Unfortunately that decided curve in the front line of the jacket is not confined to the haut monde of Miami.

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY.

The control of mind over matter has long been disputed. The truth (as Mencken says) of course is quite the reverse. Matter controls mind.

NOTE 4. The oldest jokes in the world are the jibes about mother-in-law, sorry-I-married-you, goat-eat-shirt and devil-get-you-bodily. These have amused the peasants for a thousand years. In the rough-neck columns they are welcomed today. But the highbrow Columnists bar them. Nevertheless these super-wits use these same jokes.

But the touch with which they play the themes lifts them above the rabble. The goat-eat-poet's-manuscript is used thus by B. L. T.: His column supports a goat named Evangeline (cf. Don Marquis's "Archie") and all poems that fail to "make the Line" are supposed to be eaten by Evangeline. A B. L. T. version of the into-hell-bodily jest is this:

"Eight Men Buried in Tons of Asbestos." — Milwaukee Sentinel. It is just as well to prepare for the worst.

Spoofing the dead (who never did us any harm) is provocative of mirth only because we laugh at our inferiors. A living man, no matter how worthless he be, feels that he's got a dead man beat forty ways. If a man who falls down on a banana and sits there stunned is laughable, how much more side-splitting is a dead man in a box with the sexton "pattin' him in the face with a spade." Even negroes, with their fear of ghosts, make sport of death and dead men — when the dead are not within hearing.

In Christopher Morley's Column appeared the statement that a New Jersey cemetery has a sign over the entrance: "This is a One-way Drive." They all spoof the dead and they all make jokes about matrimony.

Now let us search old Frank Adams's Column for the sorry-I-married-you gag (the Oh-Gee-I'm-Glad-I'm-Free thing as it goes in its vaudeville incarnation). Ah, here we have it:

Husband Gone Four Months, Wife Hopeful. — Syracuse Post-Standard. Still, you can't depend on men.

It isn't the subject matter of the Columnist that distinguishes the clown from the wit; it is the difference between the obvious and the subtle. The subtle Columnist gives a new twist to all he touches, and a new twist is a new thrill. And for a new thrill, Alexander's dad said he would give half his Kingdom.